

**UNCLE TITUS
IN THE COUNTRY**





ON MONDAY MORNING THE ENTIRE BIRKENFELD FAMILY GATHERED
AROUND THE TRAVELING COACH AND THERE FOLLOWED A
HEARTY FAREWELL FROM ALL SIDES.

UNCLE TITUS IN THE COUNTRY

By

JOHANNA SPYRI

Author of "Heidi," "Maxa's Children,"
"A Little Swiss Boy," "Cornelli,
Her Childhood," "Moni,
The Goat Boy."

Translated by

CLEMENT W. COUMBE

Illustrated by

FRANCES BRUNDAGE

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CHAPTER I

UNDER THE LINDEN TREES

ON the east side of the city of Karlsruhe there is a lovely park and under the shade of its linden trees a gentleman slowly paced back and forth every afternoon. The other promenaders always glanced at him in sympathy as he passed by, for it touched their hearts to see how his little companion strove to help him along. Certainly he must be very ill, he walked so very slowly, and although he always leaned heavily on a strong cane which he carried in his right hand, he found it necessary to seek the further support of the little girl's shoulder with his left. Now and again he would lift his hand and ask in a tender tone, "Tell me, my child, do I not

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press too heavily upon you?" But invariably the little girl would draw the hand again to her shoulder, exclaiming earnestly, "No! No! Certainly not, papa! Just lean more firmly on me, for I don't notice it at all."

After father and child had paced back and forth for a while they would seek rest on



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one of the many benches that were scattered along the beautiful promenade.

The invalid was Major Falk who had come to Karlsruhe recently. Formerly he had been a resident of the city of Hamburg, his quiet household consisting of his little daughter Dora and an elderly housekeeper. His wife had died shortly after Dora had been born, so the child had never known her mother. Her whole devotion was centered in her father, whose ways with her had always been marked with such tenderness that she scarcely felt the lack of a mother. But several years ago Major Falk had had to leave his home and child to do his part in war. His return was long delayed, and when he did come back home, it was as an invalid, for he had sustained a severe wound in the breast which the doctors declared it was quite likely would never heal.

Having no close relatives in Hamburg, Major Falk led a secluded life there with his daughter. He had an elder step-sister

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who had married a scholar by the name of Titus Ehrenreich. They lived in Karlsruhe, and when Major Falk realized how hopeless the physicians considered his condition, he determined to move to Karlsruhe so that, should his illness become more serious, his eleven-year-old daughter could seek the advice and help of his step-sister. He soon carried out his intention and rented pleasant lodgings for himself and Dora in the neighborhood of his sister's home, and was now enjoying the balmy spring days, taking his little daughter as his daily companion on his walks under the shade of the linden trees. The Major often grew weary, and then the two sat hand in hand on a bench while the father always had some past experience to relate. Dora never grew tired of listening. Had ever a man had more wonderful experiences than her father? Certainly there was no one so dear and grand as he, of that Dora was sure. Most of all she loved to hear her father speak about her mother, telling how sweet

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and happy she had been, bringing sunshine with her wherever she went. Everyone had loved her and once loving her, never forgot her.

When the father talked about her, he often forgot altogether where he was until it grew so late that the cool evening breeze suddenly caused him to shiver, and reminded him it was time to depart. Then the pair slowly wended their way back to the city, and far into it until they reached a narrow street with high houses on either side. Here the father usually stopped, and said to Dora: "We must look up Uncle Titus and Aunt Ninette." As they climbed the stairs, he generally warned Dora to be quiet, saying, "Step lightly, Dora! You know Uncle Titus is writing very learned books and he must not be disturbed. Aunt Ninette is not accustomed to noise either and cannot stand it." And Dora tiptoed noiselessly up the stairs and the Major rang the door bell so gently it could hardly be heard.

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Usually Aunt Ninette herself opened the door and said: "Come in, dear brother, but very quietly, if I may ask it. You know your brother-in-law is deeply absorbed in his work."



And almost without a sound the three went along the corridor and stepped into the living-room. Uncle Titus's study was alongside, so even here they had to talk with hushed voices. This Major Falk never forgot to do, though Aunt Ninette frequently broke out into

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loud lament over the many things that troubled her.

June had now arrived, bringing with it long evenings, and the two could tarry under the linden trees until a late hour. But they felt they were obliged to make their stay shorter than they wished because any belated return caused Aunt Ninette anxiety and worry.

On one such warm summer evening when the sun painted the western sky with a glory of gold and rose, the beauty of which was enhanced because it was flecked by fluffy cloudlets, Major Falk was tempted to linger on the bench longer than usual. Claspings his child's hand in his, he gazed at the golden heavens and fleeting clouds while Dora looked in wonder at her father. At last, overwhelmed with her impressions, she exclaimed: "Oh, father, if you could only see yourself! You are all shining like gold! Surely that is the way the angels in Heaven look!"

With a smile her father answered, "I think, my child, I am not to live much longer, and

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I feel as if your mother looks down on us from that shining sky."

Soon the glow in the west began to fade, and as it did, her father grew pale again. He rose and Dora followed, regretting that the beautiful color had gone so soon, but her father comforted her with the words, "Some day it will glow again on us, Dora, and much more beautifully than today. Then we will all be together again—your mother, you and I, and it will never pass away."

When they had climbed the stairs to greet Dora's uncle and aunt, the latter was standing at the open door, showing signs of great excitement, but it was only after she had led them into her living-room and gently closed the door that she put her agitation into words.

"How can you cause me such anxiety, dear brother?" she cried. "I have imagined all sorts of terrible things! What could possibly have happened to detain you so long? How could you be so thoughtless and forget that you should not be out of doors after sundown?"

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Just think what frightful things may happen if you have a cold!"

"Pray calm yourself, my dear Ninette," said the Major soothingly as soon as he had a chance to speak. "The air was so mild—really it was so warm today that it could do me no harm, and the evening was lovely; it was

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really quite wonderful. Please let me enjoy the beautiful evenings as long as I am permitted to be here. Doing so neither hastens nor delays what soon must come to pass."

These words, spoken so quietly, called forth another outburst.

"How can you talk like that? How can you give me such a fright?" cried the excited woman over and over again. "That cannot happen! That *must* not happen! Then what would—you know whom I am talking about—" and here the aunt cast a meaning look toward Dora. "No, Charles, such a catastrophe as that cannot break over our heads—it would be too much! I would not know any way out; I would not know how to help myself; it would be unbearable."

"But, my dear Ninette," returned the brother, "do not forget this:

Our days on earth are numbered,
And none the end may know,
Yet God in loving wisdom
Keeps guard o'er us below."

"Oh, yes, I am well aware of that, and I

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know it is quite true," assented the sister. "But when one can see no way out and can find no help, one feels like dying of fright. Yet you speak of these dreadful things as though it were a matter of course that they should happen."

"Let us say good-night now and try not to worry any more, my dear Ninette," said the Major, holding out his hand. "We must both take these lines to heart:

'Yet God in loving wisdom
Keeps guard o'er us below.'

"Ah, yes, yes, it is surely true, it is surely true," assented Dora's aunt once more. "But don't catch cold on the street, and do go down the stairs lightly and without noise. Do you hear, Dora? And also close the lower door quietly and, Charles, take care as you cross the street that you are not in a draft too long!"

During these last warnings the father and daughter had gone down the stairs, and Dora closed the house door carefully, according to

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instructions. They had only to cross the narrow street to reach their own home.

On the following evening, as Dora was seated on the bench under the trees by the side of her father, she asked, "Papa, didn't Aunt Ninette know before that:

'Our days on earth are numbered,
And none the end may know,
Yet God in loving wisdom
Keeps guard o'er us below' ?"

"Yes, of course she has always known it," answered her father, "but you see it is only for the moment, when the good aunt's great fears overcome her, and she forgets God rules over all. As soon as she thinks, she is set right again."

Dora sat musing for a while, and then asked, "But, papa, what can one do to keep fear from overcoming one and from dying of fright, as Aunt Ninette says?"

"My dear child," replied the father, "I will tell you what to do. Whatever happens to us, we must always remember that it comes from

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the dear God. If it is a joy, we must be thankful at heart for it. If it is a sorrow, it must not frighten and worry us too much,



because we know that God the Father only sends what is for our good. In that way we need never suffer from fear, for when a misfortune comes to us that is so great we can see no way out and there seems to be no aid, yet the good Lord knows a way. He is sure to send help to us. He can make good come out of evil, out of something that it seems to

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us will overwhelm us. Do you understand me, Dora? And will you think of my words whenever you are unhappy? For all of us must pass through hard days; they will come to you, dear child."

"Yes, yes, I understand it already," Dora assured him. "I will certainly remember it, papa."

After a little silence, the father continued, "There is also something else which we must not forget. We must not only think of God when something unusual occurs. We must think about Him always about everything we are to do and ask Him: 'Dear God, is this right?' By that means we are always in His presence, and when a misfortune comes and we need Him, we have the assurance of His help. If we forget Him day after day, when disaster or sorrow comes we find it difficult to go to Him, and fear seizes us."

"Oh, I will certainly not lose my way, papa," said Dora with zeal. "I will surely ask the dear God every day: 'Am I doing right?'"

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Gently the father stroked the little girl's hand as he held it in his own. He said no more, but his glances were filled with such abounding love for her that Dora felt herself surrounded by protecting care.

The sun sank golden behind the green trees and father and child wandered slowly back to the high house in the narrow city street.

CHAPTER II

LONG, LONG DAYS

A FEW days after that evening Dora was sitting on her father's bed. Finally she laid her head beside his and sobbed as though her heart would break for he lay so still and pale with a tender smile curving his white lips. Dora could not comprehend all that had happened, yet she understood that her father had joined her mother in Heaven.

That morning when her father had not come to her bedside to wake her as was his custom, she had sought her father's room instead, and had found him lying so still on his bed. Thinking him asleep, she seated herself gently so as not to wake him. Then the landlady had come upstairs with the breakfast and when she glanced through the open door into the bedroom, she drew back with the exclamation: "O God, he is dead! I will fetch your aunt!" And with this she had hurried away.

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Her words had crushed Dora's heart and she had put her head down on the pillow beside her father, and lay thus for a long while, sobbing in heartbroken grief. Then Dora heard the door open, and her aunt stepped in. Instantly she raised her head from the pillow and did her level best to suppress all her sobs, for she felt sure she would hear loud demonstrations of grief, and she wished to join in them as little as possible. She continued to cry, but very quietly, hiding her face in her hands to smother her sobs. The aunt wailed loudly and pitifully, declaring that every evil had come to her and repeating over and over again she saw no way out.

What should she attempt to do first, her aunt wondered. In the open drawer of the little table that stood by the bed of the sleeper lay a number of papers. These she gathered together in order to lock away. As she handled them, a letter addressed to her came into view. She broke it open at once and read:

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"Dear Sister Ninette:

I feel that I am to leave you soon, but I will not talk over the matter with you and so bring about unhappy hours before it is necessary. I wish to make one last request of you. Please take care of my child as long as she needs your support. I am able to leave her but little money. Use it that she may learn to do some useful work so that, with God's help, she may be able to support herself. Do not allow yourself to be overcome with grief, but believe, as I do, that the good Lord will do His best for the children we give over to His care when we ourselves can do no more for them. May God reward you for your kindness to me, and for all you do for Dora!"

The letter must have soothed the aunt somewhat for she did not renew her loud wailing, but turned to Dora who, her face in her hands, was still crying quietly.

"Come with me, Dora," said the aunt. "From

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now on you shall live with us. We must remember that your father is well and happy now; otherwise we might fall into despair with grief and fear."

Dora stood up and followed obediently, though she felt as though everything was over for her and she could not live any longer. As she mounted the stairs behind her aunt and went into the silent rooms, the aunt for

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the first time omitted to warn Dora about entering quietly; it must have dawned on her that it was unnecessary. The truth was Dora was so crushed with grief, it seemed to her that no joyful sound could ever pass her lips again.

Aunt Ninette had a little room in the garret which she used as a storage place for odds and ends. This she planned to arrange for Dora's bedroom. She had, it is true, to voice some laments about the disturbance such a change would entail, but the plan was carried out, and a bed set up for Dora in the little room where she was to live from now on. The servant girl went at once to fetch Dora's few belongings, and she set her little trunk in a corner and put everything in order.

Without a word of objection Dora carried out all her aunt's instructions and then, being called, went downstairs to the supper table. Uncle Titus partook of the food but said nothing, for he was absorbed in his own thoughts, and immediately after the meal was

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ended, Dora sought her tiny attic room.

On the following morning the little girl pleaded to go over to her father, and after a few complaining words, Aunt Ninette took her. Dora bade a very gentle good-bye to her father, sobbing quietly, but speechless. Only when she was back in her own little room did she break out into loud weeping, for she knew that soon they would carry her dear father away and she would never see him again on earth.

Dora's days were now arranged after quite a new plan. During the short time that she had lived with her father in Karlsruhe she had never been sent to any school, but her father reviewed with her what she had learned in Hamburg. He apparently did not wish to begin any new studies with her but preferred to leave such matters for his sister's decision. Aunt Ninette had an acquaintance who was principal of a private school for girls, and Dora was to spend every morning in classes there. For the afternoon hours a seamstress was engaged to give Dora a good ground

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knowledge of how to cut and make shirts. For Aunt Ninette considered that the making of shirts was one of the most useful of occupations, and she had decided Dora was to master it and so be able to earn her livelihood. For, so said Aunt Ninette, as all clothing begins with a shirt, so does all knowledge of sewing begin with a knowledge of shirt making. If later Dora might advance further, perhaps even to dress making, she would be highly gratified, but without a correct beginning there could be no successful progress.

Dora now sat each morning through on the school bench busy with her studies and every afternoon occupied a little chair beside the seamstress. She bent low over her sewing on the heavy shirt until she grew both hot and weary over the task. In the mornings there were other children around her happily engaged with their studies and as Dora was eager to learn, the time sped for her and she had little opportunity to give way to sad thoughts about her father. But it was quite

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different in the afternoons. The long hours dragged slowly by as she sat in the little room with the sewing teacher close beside her watching her efforts to sew a straight seam on the heavy shirting that was so large and difficult for little hands to handle. The long, hot summer afternoons had come and many times it took all her power to push the needle through, for the cotton goods became moist and heavy in her fingers and the needle grew blunt and dull with the great heat. If Dora



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looked up at the wall clock that ticked so loudly and regularly in the silence of the room, it seemed it was always no later than half past four. Surely the hands of the clock did not move after that hour! How long, hot and silent these afternoons were!

Now and then the sounds of a piano reached her from the distance. What a happy child to be sitting at the instrument practicing, thought Dora. She could imagine nothing more delightful than to sit at a piano and little by little learn how to play all kinds of lovely songs and melodies. Her little heart hungered as she listened intently to the distant music, for there were no vehicles passing through the narrow street below to drown it, and the voices of the few people who passed did not carry up to the room under the eaves. Even the oft repeated scales and exercises failed to be irksome to the listening child, and when at intervals some pretty bit of melody floated up to her, she became quite excited with the joy it brought and missed not a single note.

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"Oh, how happy the child must be who sits at that piano and learns such lovely things!" Dora thought to herself.

During the long, tedious afternoon hours many sad thoughts came to Dora, and she remembered how, at this season last year, she had wandered here and there under the linden trees with her father. Such a happy time would never come to her again for she would never see and hear her father any more. Then came the consolation that her father himself had given her. Some day she would be in the company of both her father and her mother, in a golden glow like that which had shone about her father that evening in the park. But it might be a long time, unless something very extraordinary should happen; for instance, that she should be taken sick from the hard shirt sewing and die.

But, in the end, Dora always returned to the one thought which afforded her the most comfort, the words her father had taught her:

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'Yet God in loving wisdom
Keeps guard o'er us below.'

She *would* believe in that most firmly, and then would feel much happier at heart, and the needle in her fingers would travel more easily and quickly as though it were driven by a joyful faith. Nevertheless the days were long and weary ones and when in the evening she returned to the home of Uncle Titus and Aunt Ninette, the silence of that house oppressed her. Then came dinner, during which Uncle Titus always had a great newspaper spread before his face and read and ate behind it. Aunt Ninette spoke only when it was absolutely necessary and then always in soft, guarded tones so as not to disturb her husband across the table. Dora said nothing at all at table and, in fact, curbed her desires so well that she seldom spoke at all during the hours she spent at home between her time of study and of work. She had been impressed by the silent household so that Aunt Ninette no longer found it necessary to warn her to

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step lightly and to speak softly. She had little heart for anything she did these days, the natural buoyancy of the little girl's heart seeming to be quite crushed. By nature Dora was a gay and happy child, showing keen interest in everything that went on around her, so that her father had frequently exclaimed in deepest satisfaction, "The child is exactly like her dear mother! She has the same freedom from care, the same inexhaustible cheerfulness and joy of life!"

However, during these days Dora was a far different little girl, and never gave her aunt any reason for complaint, for she was very much afraid of her aunt's sharp tongue and wished to avoid anything and everything that would give rise to an outbreak. Only rarely did Aunt Ninette scold her and then for many days after Dora would not express even the slightest wish—every joy of life seemed to have left her.

Matters stood in this way when one evening Dora returned home from her sewing lesson

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filled with the inspiration that had come to her that afternoon when from across the street came the melody:

“Rejoice ye in living,
While yet ye may;
Pluck ye the roses,
Ere they droop and decay.”

Dora knew the song and could sing it very well. Oh, the joy to know that someone could play it so beautifully on the piano! How it thrilled her!

“Oh, Aunt Ninette!” she exclaimed immediately on entering the living-room, “it certainly must be the most wonderful thing to be able to play the piano! Do you think the time will ever come when I may learn?”

“For Heaven’s sake, child, how can you say such things to me?” complained the aunt. “How can you upset me so? How could anything like that happen to us? Just think of the frightful noise a piano makes in a house. How could we possibly endure it? Alas, Dora, where did you get such an unfortunate idea as

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that? Besides, where could we find either the money to buy one or the time for you to practice? Surely we have troubles enough already; please don't add any new ones to those I have to bear!"

This incident determined Dora never to make any more suggestions, and from then on she never spoke about a piano, however much joy the music brought to her as she listened to it in the sewing-room.

Later in the evenings after Dora had studied her school lessons, while the aunt mended or knitted in absolute silence or perhaps nodded in slumber, she climbed the stairs to her tiny garret chamber. Before closing her little window Dora always peeped out into the night, especially when the sky was sprinkled with bright, twinkling stars. There were always five just over her head. They always stood quite close together and by and by Dora came to regard them as being her very own stars which came to her every night as friends wishing to bring her consolation and to assure her

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that she was not alone. In some mysterious way the feeling grew in her heart that these stars were set twinkling by her father and mother to bring her cheer and greetings. They became a real comfort to her as each evening she stepped into her dark little garret room which was only dimly lighted by the wax candle she carried in her hand. Every evening she sent her little prayer up to Heaven and then there came a stronger faith that the good Lord watched over her and guarded her well. Her

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father had told her many times that so long as she asked God for His protection she need never fear; His loving care would always enfold her.

Thus passed the long, hot summer. Fall came and winter followed, with days so dark and so dreary. Dora often thought she would much rather endure the heat of summer than such intense cold. She often shivered so she could scarcely sleep, for it was very cold so high up under the roof and she could not even think of opening her little window to gaze at the bright stars. But at last spring came and summer too, and everything went on in the silent household as it had for many years. Dora still worked steadily on the great shirts and longer than ever before, for now she could sew better and must really help the seamstress.

When the hot days came, something out of the ordinary happened that brought forth bitter lamentation from Aunt Ninette. Uncle Titus had a fainting spell and the doctor was called in. After watching him for a little while

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and making more or less of an examination, the doctor looked up at Aunt Ninette and inquired, "Probably for thirty years he never got beyond the limits of the city of Karlsruhe? And during that entire time never left his writing desk except to eat and sleep?"

She had to nod assent, for it was the truth.

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor, "but now he must get away. At once! Better today than tomorrow. Off to Switzerland. Up into the good fresh mountain air, but not too high up. No other medicine needed, but stay away six weeks at least. That's my advice. Do you care where you go? No?" lifting his eyebrows. Then, "Well, think it over. So will I, and tomorrow I'll come again and expect to find you ready for the trip."

With the words, the doctor was out of the door, but Aunt Ninette was close behind him for suddenly she had a thousand and one questions to ask. This unexpected command startled her and she was speechless for a moment. However, she found her tongue by

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the time she had reached the door and regardless of his very evident wish to depart, the doctor was detained on the steps three times longer than he had been inside. When the aunt returned she found her husband sitting at his desk as usual deeply absorbed in his writing.

“My dear Titus!” she exclaimed in the greatest astonishment, “didn’t you hear what faces us? Don’t you know we must break away from home, leave everything here and journey off to we don’t know where? And to stay away so long—six weeks or even longer, and not to know where, or how, or with whom, or with what neighbors! It is a dreadful thought and yet there you sit calmly writing as though nothing was going to happen!”

“My dear, because of the very fact that we have to go away, I wish to make the best use of my time now,” answered Uncle Titus, writing away busily.

“My dear Titus, it is indeed wonderful how quickly you can face unexpected conditions!

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However, this matter must be discussed for it may have far-reaching consequences," declared Aunt Ninette impressively. "Just think what may become of us!"

"That does not matter a bit so long as things are quiet. And that's the way it is in the country," remarked Uncle Titus, still working away.

"That is just what I am weighing in my mind," continued his wife. "How can we be sure that we shall not find ourselves in an overcrowded house? Or think if we should choose a noisy neighborhood! There might be a school near by, or a mill, or a waterfall—there are so very many of them in Switzerland. Or it might be a noisy factory, or our rooms might face the market place, where the country folk gather, and where all the men of an entire canton meet. That would cause unheard-of tumult. But I have an idea, dear Titus! I know a way of avoiding all this. I'll write to Hamburg, to the aged uncle of my brother Charles's wife. You know the family once

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lived in Switzerland and I can get accurate information from him."

"That looks to me like a somewhat round-about method," replied Uncle Titus. "And as far as I remember, the family had an uncomfortable experience in Switzerland. In that case they will not have kept up any correspondence."

"Leave that to me, my dear Titus. I'll see to everything," advised Aunt Ninette.

She went off to write the letter to Hamburg, and then she visited Dora's teacher, the seamstress. She was a very decent woman, and the two talked over the loneliness Dora must endure while her aunt and uncle were absent. After a long discussion between the two women, it was decided that Dora should spend all her free hours after school with the seamstress. In the evening the woman would accompany the child home and spend the night hours there so that Dora would not be alone in the dwelling.

These plans were explained to Dora that

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same evening. The little girl heard the news silently and then went upstairs to her little chamber. Here she seated herself on the bed for a while, and there arose in her mind many memories of the times when she had passed each day in the companionship of her father. How lovingly he had talked to her! How pleasant the evening hours when she sat beside him, often on his bed when he was very weary and lay down early! What a contrast to her present loneliness! And now, when uncle and aunt also went away, she would be still more lonesome, and there would be no one in the world for her to love or who would love her. 7

Gradually Dora became so sad that she placed her head between her hands and commenced to cry bitterly. Thus she sat for a long time, and ever more and more she realized how utterly forsaken she was. Now if her uncle and aunt should die she would be entirely alone in the world, not a person belonging to her. Then she would have to sew on the great

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heavy shirts from early morning till late night; her aunt had often remarked that this was the only way she could make her living. She would not have minded the heavy toil if only she were not so forsaken—if only she had someone to love. The long stretch of lonely years oppressed her so that she sat there weeping until the bells in a neighboring clock tower struck so many times that they startled her. Dropping her hands from her eyes, she discovered the room was in deep darkness. Her little candle had long since burned itself out and the street lamps sent no gleams up to her room. But through the little window her five stars gleamed so brightly that it made Dora feel that her father's eyes looked down on her full of faith and brimming with love as on that memorable evening when he said,

‘Yet God in loving wisdom
Keeps guard o’er us below.’

The bright shining of the stars seemed to penetrate her sad heart and make it glow again with hope, for what her father had said

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must be so. She could have faith and did not need to fear anything that was going to happen. Clinging to this thought, Dora sought her bed, but until her eyes closed in slumber she gazed directly up at the lovely stars which were so great a comfort to her.

The doctor came to the house again the next evening as he had promised to do and suggested a number of places where they might go that would benefit the health of Uncle Titus. But Aunt Ninette at once stepped forward and declared she was on the track of just the right spot; that there were many conditions which had to be met if her husband was to go through this experience without harm; that the greatest care must be exercised. She was doing all this and when she had finished attending to everything she would ask for the doctor's approval.

"Pray don't delay, but start at once. Get off immediately!" warned the doctor and turned to hurry away, but nearly tumbled over Dora who had stepped into the room so quietly

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"THERE, THERE! I HOPE I DIDN'T HURT YOU!" HE EXCLAIMED,
PATting THE STARTLED CHILD ON THE SHOULDER.

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that he was not aware of her presence.

"There, there! I hope I didn't hurt you!" he exclaimed, patting the startled child on the shoulder. "The change will be good for this pale little girl, too. Give her lots of milk in Switzerland." Then turning to Dora, "You must drink lots of milk while you are away!"

"We have determined to leave Dora here, Herr Doctor," remarked Aunt Ninette.

"Well, all right; that is your affair of course, Madam Ehrenreich! Only you must watch out; otherwise you will have greater cause to worry over her than over your husband. Good-bye! And best wishes."

And with that the doctor was gone.

"Herr Doctor! Herr Doctor! What do you mean? What do you mean by that?" cried Aunt Ninette as she hastened down the stairs after him.

"I mean," the doctor called back, "that the little girl has anaemia. She cannot live long unless she gets some good red blood into her body."

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"Oh, for Heaven's sake, is every evil under the sun to fall on us?" wailed Aunt Ninette, wringing her hands as she entered her husband's room again. "My dear Titus, do put your pen aside for just a second! You didn't hear the frightful thing the doctor told me would happen if Dora does not get more blood."

"Take her with us to Switzerland; she makes no noise," suggested Uncle Titus, never stopping his writing.

"But, my dear Titus, to make such decisions in half a second! She makes no noise, and I know that is the most important thing. Nevertheless, there remains so much to be thought about, to be weighed, decided upon—alas, alas!"

But Aunt Ninette noticed that her husband was buried in his work and knew that further words would avail nothing. She returned to her own room where she sat down and pondered the matter, from beginning to end, taking up each thought three times over. At

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last she arrived at the conclusion that it would be best to follow the doctor's advice and take Dora with them.

Several days later an answer to the letter she had sent to Hamburg arrived. It was very brief: the aged uncle knew nothing of the visit that his brother had made to Switzerland. Besides, that was all thirty years ago. He did say that the little village of Tannenberg, where his brother had lived, was certainly a quiet and remote place as he remembered his brother had complained about the lack of company as long as he lived there. That was all.

Aunt Ninette now determined to appeal to the parsonage at Tannenberg for a suitable house in which to live for the meager information from the aged uncle pleased her as well as her husband. Such quiet and solitude were the very things they desired.

They did not have to wait long for the answer, and it proved very satisfactory. It brought word that Tannenberg was a small village of scattered houses and cottages, and

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suggested that they take lodgings with a teacher's widow, an elderly, very honorable woman. She could offer two rooms and a small chamber. For further information, if any was desired, the pastor enclosed the widow's address. Such information was very necessary indeed for Aunt Ninette, and that in detail. She wrote to the widow at once, saying how pleased she was that the houses in Tannenberg were scattered, but asking for a detailed description of the neighborhood where she lived, because it might happen that the widow's house was so located that its surroundings were not adapted to the invalid's special requirements. Hence she must ask whether there were any smithy, mill, locksmith, cartwright, stone mason, and more especially any slaughter house near by. Whether there were any school or, still worse, any waterfall close to her house.

The teacher's widow wrote a very pleasant letter in reply and was able to answer every question in the most satisfying manner. No manufactory was to be found anywhere near;

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the school and mill were far away and no sound of waterfalls was to be heard—there was none in the district. Further, the widow was able to state that she lived in a very pleasant neighborhood, with no lodging houses anywhere near, only the great house of Mr. Birkenfeld, surrounded by its lovely gardens, its beautiful fields and meadows. This was the most highly esteemed family in the district and Mr. Birkenfeld sat in every assembly and he and his good wife were the benefactors of the whole neighborhood. The widow herself had to thank this family for much, above all that she had so nice a home, for her little house belonged to the Birkenfeld estate. Mr. Birkenfeld had offered it to her after her husband's death and was a landlord with few equals.

Everything seemed to promise well and the day for departure was settled.

Dora heard with astonishment that she was to go along with them, and joyfully packed the material for six large shirts which she was to take along for work while away. The

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prospect of sewing on the shirts in a new place and in new surroundings did not trouble her; she regarded it as a holiday even though she spent the time sewing those long seams.



After many tedious days, boxes and trunks stood ready in the hall on the ground floor and the maidservant was sent to hire a carriage. Dora, dressed for traveling, stood at the top of the staircase, her heart beating in pleasant anticipation of the journey and all the new sights she would see in the next six weeks. It seemed to Dora a glorious prospect after all

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those long, long days spent in the little room of the seamstress.

At last Aunt Ninette and Uncle Titus, burdened with numerous packages and umbrellas, descended the stairs, stowed away their belongings and finally stepped into the waiting carriage. Somewhat exhausted with the strain of preparation, aunt and uncle leaned back in the seat, and expectantly began their journey to the country.

CHAPTER III

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HEDGE

FAR above the thickly wooded valley and the glistening lake one sees a height clothed with the fresh green of pasture lands where blue and red and yellow flowers blossom in profusion and nod in the sunshine from early spring until late in the fall.

On this towering peak stood the great Birkenfeld house, and alongside it the roomy barn and also a stable where four spirited horses stamped and glossy cows stood at their mangers contentedly chewing the fragrant grass which the considerate Battist, house-servant for many long years, pushed into the crib from time to time. When Hans, the young stable boy, and the other workers on the estate were busy, Battist always made the rounds through the stalls and saw to it that everything was as it should be in stable and barn. For Battist knew all there was to know about

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handling animals. As a young lad he had entered the service of Mr. Birkenfeld's father and now on account of his ripe years he had been advanced to the place of house-servant. Nevertheless he always kept an eye on the stalls and the whole farm. In the hayloft lay high heaps of freshly gathered hay in finely ordered rows, and opposite, in the granary, in separate compartments, rye, barley and oats were piled to the ceiling. All these grains were harvested on Mr. Birkenfeld's land, for his estate reached far beyond the heights, well down into the valley. On the other side of the house stood a roomy laundry, and not far from there, but separated from it with a high thick hedge which stretched along the main buildings and garden, stood a cottage which also belonged to the estate. It was this cottage that Mr. Birkenfeld had turned over a few years ago to the teacher's widow, Mrs. Kurd.

The sunshine of a warm summer evening enfolded the height and the red and white daisies blossoming in the field before the house

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peeped merrily up at the sky. On the wide steps leading up to the front door of the house lay a shaggy dog that blinked now and then to see if anything was happening. But all was still and he shut his eyes again to continue his slumber in the evening sunlight. From time to time a young gray cat appeared in the doorway, looked at the sleeper and, when the dog remained motionless, went in again disdainfully. A great silence reigned in the front of the house, but from the rear door that led into the garden voices could be heard in lively conversation, and there was much coming and going to and fro.

The crunch of wheels was heard, and the sound grew nearer and nearer until a carriage stopped in front of the widow's house. The shaggy dog opened his eyes and pointed his ears, but finding the occasion unworthy of even a growl, slept on. The guests alighted from the carriage and entered the cottage very quietly. Mrs. Kurd, the teacher's widow, received them very politely and led them into

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her house where they at once took possession of their rooms. Soon afterward Aunt Ninette was busy in her large room unpacking the big trunk, while Uncle Titus sat in his room at a square table carefully arranging his writing materials. From time to time Dora ran to the window of her little room, for the scene was more lovely than anything she had seen all her life.

Into the far distance reached the green fields sprinkled with red and yellow flowers. Down below one looked on the woods, and farther off on a blue lake. Up above there gleamed the snow white mountain peaks and at this hour nearer hills shone golden green in the evening sun. Dora could scarcely tear herself away from the window. She never knew there was anything so beautiful in the world. And now her aunt called her into her room beyond to carry into her own room the things that belonged to her which had been packed in her aunt's trunk.

"Oh, Aunt Ninette, how beautiful it is here!"

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burst out Dora on entering, speaking louder than she had ever done during all the time she had lived in her uncle's house. The excitement of the day and the beauty of her surroundings had brought back the gay light-hearted Dora of the old days.

"Sh-sh! What has come over you?" rasped Aunt Ninette. "Your uncle is in the next room and is already deep in his work."

Her ardor dampened, Dora quietly took possession of her things and as she passed by the window she quavered, "May I take a hasty look at what is to be seen out of this window, Auntie?"

"You may look out for a moment," was the reply, "but there is no one in the pretty, quiet garden that you see from there. At the window yonder is a view of a big open yard in front of the house. There is nothing to be seen there except a quietly sleeping dog; I hope it will continue to sleep. You may take a quick look."

Dora opened the window looking out on the

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garden. The sweet perfume of jasmine and mignonette was wafted up to her from the flower beds. The garden was so large that the high green hedge bounding it seemed to stretch far, far in the distance. Dora's eyes rested in keen delight upon the patches of smooth green lawn, beds of gay flowers and the bowers formed by dense interwoven growths of vines and shrubs. How lovely it must be to roam about there! Not a soul was in sight but she knew someone must have been there recently for at the front door was a peculiar triumphal arch formed of two long bean poles which had been closely intertwined with branches of fir. Between the posts of the arch hung a large cardboard sign, which swayed back and forth in the wind. It bore a long inscription written in big letters.

Suddenly a commotion from the other side of the house attracted Dora and she ran to the other window and looked out. There in the drive stood a great coach with two brown horses impatiently stamping. Rushing out of

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the house came one—two—three—four, indeed still more—five—six boys and girls. “I! I! I want to ride on top!” came the cry from each of them, louder and louder. In the midst of the crowd of children a dog was leaping, first high up at one, then at another, all the time barking with joy. Such an uproar as this had not reached the ears of Aunt Ninette from time immemorial!

“For Heaven’s sake, what’s going on there?” she cried, horrified. “What sort of a place have we come to?”

“Oh, come, Auntie, look! look!” begged Dora. “They are all getting into the coach!”

In all her life Dora had never witnessed such a jolly scene. One boy sprang up on the wheel, and from there clambered nimbly to the top. Then he bent over as far as he could and stretched out his arms to the dog who was leaping up to him with howls of joy. “Come, Schnurri! Come, Schnurri!” the youngster called out his loudest, trying to seize the dog first by paw and then by shaggy coat. At last

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the coachman Hans swung the dog up. Meanwhile the tallest boy lifted a struggling little lass and with a swing she was out of his arms and in the coach.

"Me too! Me too, Jul! Higher for me! Much higher for me!" two little boys shouted at once. These two, one round as a ball, the other a little taller, jumped around their older brother as they begged his aid. Swinging one boy into the coach and then the other, their shouts were louder than ever. And now the big boy jumped into the carriage and drew in after him the sister who had waited until the youngsters had been attended to. The coach door was closed with a terrific bang—the big Jul had powerful muscles—and the horses started off. But now there went up a different cry.

"If Schnurri may go, then Philomele must go too! Trine, Trine!" screamed the little girl full throated. "Give me Philomele! Give me Philomele!"

The sturdy kitchen-maid appeared at the door

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THE TALLEST BOY LIFTED A STRUGGLING LITTLE LASS AND WITH A SWING SHE WAS OUT OF HIS ARMS AND IN THE COACH.

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and immediately took in the situation. She laughed aloud, grabbed the gray cat that was squatting on one of the stone steps and casting distrustful looks up at the dog Schnurri on the front seat, and tossed her right in the middle of the coach. With a loud crack of the whip, the company was off.

In the greatest fright Aunt Ninette bustled into her husband's room to see what impression all this had made on him. He was undisturbed, his window closed and fastened.

"My dear Titus, who could have foreseen such a thing? What is to be done now?" wailed the aunt.

"It seems to me the house over there is overflowing with children. We cannot help that; we must just close the windows," he replied calmly.

"But, my dear Titus, just bear in mind that you came here so as to breathe the fresh mountain air. Since you never go outdoors, you must let the invigorating air into your room. If things begin this way, what's going to be the

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outcome of it all? What shall we do if this goes on?" bewailed his wife further.

"We must move," replied her husband, continuing to write.

This thought pacified her and she returned to her room.

In the meanwhile Dora had put everything in order in her little room. A great desire had entered her heart, but she knew it could not be fulfilled until everything in her room had been set to rights. The numerous children and their joy and laughter had so enchanted Dora that she could think of nothing else than her wish to see them come home, and watch what might happen next. Perhaps they would go into the garden where stood the triumphal arch. Then she could see them near at hand! Dora thought out a way in which this could be brought about. The little garden surrounding the cottage of Mrs. Kurd was separated from the great one only by a high hedge. Somewhere in this hedge there might be a hole through which she could peep and see

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what the children looked like and witness all the things they did.

This idea so engrossed Dora that she did not give a thought to what her aunt would have to say about her wish to go out in the evening. The desire in her heart was stronger than the fear of refusal. She went at once to her aunt's room and at the door she met Mrs. Kurd who had come to announce supper.

Dora quickly asked if she might go into the garden for a little while but Aunt Ninette replied that they were going to eat now and afterward it would be too late, it would be getting on toward nightfall. Mrs. Kurd assured the aunt that they could all go into the garden whenever they wished to do so—not a soul entered it, and Dora would be perfectly safe there at any time. At last Aunt Ninette gave permission to Dora to spend a little time in the garden after supper and Dora could hardly eat for joy at the prospect. She kept listening intently for the return of the coach, but did not hear it.

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"Now you may go out for a while," Aunt Ninette said at last, "but do not leave the garden!"

Dora promised gladly, and ran out to the hedge to find some opening where she could peep through. It was a white thorn hedge grown so high and dense that Dora could look neither through nor over it. But down near the ground there were openings here and there through which one could see quite clearly into the garden beyond. It was necessary to stoop down almost to the ground but this was no



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trouble to Dora, she wanted so much to see and hear those children.

Never before had she known such a family, so many children, large and small, all so blithe and gay. In all her life she had never seen so many children crowd together in a coach and travel off in it. What capital fun that must be!

Dora leaned down and peeped through the hole. She could not hear a sound. The big garden lay in the twilight in perfect silence. Dora could not inhale enough of the heavy fragrance of the flowers to satisfy her. What *must* it be to walk to and fro between those flower beds? How wonderful it must be to sit beneath those trees laden with rosy apples! Under one stood a table which was half hidden by the low hanging branches and by the snow-white things piled upon it. What they were Dora was unable to tell. She was entranced with the view; she had never seen such a lovely garden, but now—now there was a tumult of happy voices. The coach had returned; the children had arrived! Then for a moment all

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was still—they had all gone into the house. Then all was uproar again, and they trooped out into the garden.

Mr. Birkenfeld had returned from a long journey and his children had driven down to the lake to meet him at the wharf where the steamboat docked. The mother had made every preparation for a festive reception, and while the children were gone had set out a banquet in the garden under the great apple tree. The father had been absent several weeks, and so his homecoming was a joyous event in the family and had to be celebrated in all kinds of ways. When the coach drew up in front of the house, Mrs. Birkenfeld hastened out to welcome her husband. Then one after another the children jumped out of the carriage, Schnurri and Philomele leaping after them. Amid the joyous barking of the dog they all went up the steps and into the parlor. Here again the greetings broke out so boisterously from them all that the father was almost overwhelmed by the many hands stretched out

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in eager welcome and the jumble of happy voices.

"Now, children, one at a time! One at a time, so that I may greet you properly," he remonstrated above the hubbub. "The smallest comes first and then according to size. Come here, my little Hun, what have you to tell me?"

The father drew his youngest, a chubby little boy nearly five years old, to him. He had been named Huldreich but when he had been asked his name his baby tongue had answered, "Hun." This name had clung to him, his brothers and sisters quickly adopting it and the entire household following their suit. Jul, their oldest boy, once declared that young Hun's flat little nose reminded him of his Asiatic brothers, but this the mother would never admit.

The youngster had so much to report to his father that long before all the news was told he had to pass on to the next child.

"Later on, little Hun, later on tell me the rest. Now I must greet Willi and Lili. Well, are we

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still lively and happy? And have we been truly obedient all the time?"

"Mostly," answered Willi a little timidly, while his sister Lili, remembering several deviations from the path of obedience during the father's absence, thought it advisable not to take any part in the conversation but danced joyfully around her father. 'These two, Willi and Lili, were twins, just entering their eighth year. They lived and strived as inseparables and carried out all sorts of projects which frequently they had a clear notion should not be undertaken.

"And you, Rolf, how are you?" the father asked, turning to the twelve-year-old lad with broad forehead and strong physique. "Have you worked bravely at your Latin, and have you thought out some clever riddles?"

"Both, papa. But the others won't ever guess the riddles right; they are too lazy to think and mother is too busy."

"Well, that's too bad. And you, Paula?" asked the father next, drawing his oldest

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daughter, a thirteen-year-old girl, close to him. "Still going around alone in the garden? Still without a girl friend?"

"Both are true, papa, but it is lovely to have you back again," Paula assured him, embracing him fondly.

Holding out his hand to his eldest, Mr. Birkenfeld said, "And the big Jul is passing his holidays in the most useful manner?"

"Useful and pleasant too," responded Jul, shaking his father's hand. "You know, father, the hazelnuts are ripe now and I am overseeing a careful harvesting. Between whiles I am riding young Nestor so he does not grow lazy."

The seventeen-year-old Julius had been attending an academy in a city near by for several years and was now spending his holidays at home. As he had always been tall for his age and was now quite a man in stature, he had long been called "the big Jul."

Mr. Birkenfeld turned to the children's governess, Miss Hanenwinkel, and greeted her in the friendliest manner, but Jul stepped closer

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to say, "Now, father, I must ask you to continue your greetings out in the garden for out there all sorts of surprises await you." But his last remark cost him dear. Instantly Willi and Lili flew at him, tugged, pulled and pinched him to make him understand he was to keep quiet about the surprises. He defended himself as best he could, saying, "Lili, you little gadfly, let go! I'll turn the conversation!" Then to his father, he said louder, "I mean in the garden where mother has prepared some surprises you will like. We must celebrate your return with a feast, papa."

"That is splendid! Perhaps we may find a table spread under my apple tree. That's what I would call a surprise!" exclaimed the father joyfully. "Well, come along, all!"

Giving his arm to the mother, he was followed by the whole brood, Willi and Lili highly amused that their father should think this was the only surprise awaiting him.

As the father and mother stepped out of the door, they found themselves under the high

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triumphal arch. From both sides of it gleamed the light of red lanterns which shone upon the large cardboard sign with its long inscription in big letters.

"Aha!" said the astonished father. "A grand triumphal arch, and a poem of welcome! I must read it!" And he read aloud:

"We greet you on this happy day,
Beside the garden door,
We've longed and prayed for your return,
And now you're here once more.
So under lanterns glowing,
With hearts where love beats true,
We've spread a regal banquet
With which to welcome you!"

"Very beautiful! Of course Rolf is the author, is he not?"

Willi and Lili darted forward and shouted, "Yes, yes! Rolf did it, but *we* invented it. He made the poem and Jul put up the posts, and we fetched the fir branches."

"This is a splendid reception, children!" exclaimed the delighted father again. "And what a lot of little red and yellow and blue

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lanterns you have! Why, it looks like a fairy garden! I must get closer to it."

The garden really did have the appearance of an enchanted spot. The paper lanterns had been made a long time before. They were of all colors, and this morning Jul had strung them up to all the trees and high bushes in the garden. While the greetings were going on in the house, old Battist and the young kitchen-maid Trine had lighted them.

Myriads of bright lanterns gleamed from every branch of the apple tree and shone upon the rosy-cheeked apples until it looked like an immense Christmas tree. All the bright little candles sent streams of light down upon the white tablecloth on which the mother had set a great roast, high piles of apple tarts and all kinds of good things in beautiful array.

"I call this a banquet hall," exclaimed the father happily, as he stood under the sparkling apple tree. "Everything will taste fine out here! What, why, here is another inscription!"

And there a second white sheet of paper was

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suspended by two cords from the high branches of the tree on which was written:

“In my first we all best live,
If we have such.
My second is still to arrive;
It means that much.
Both together bring a feast,
With papa’s presence not the least.”

“A riddle! Rolf must have made it for me!” said the father, clapping Rolf kindly on the back. “I’ll set to work to guess it very soon, but now we’ll sit down to the banquet table and rejoice at our reunion. Whoever guesses the riddle shall be the first to toast me.”

The happy family sat down under the apple tree and the conversation soon became lively for everyone, for from the big Jul down to the tiny Hun each wished to tell all the things that had occurred during the separation. It seemed there would never be an end to the news.

But now came a sudden pause for the father drew out from under his chair an enormous package and began to unwrap it. The children watched every movement in intense excitement

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for they knew very well their father had brought a present for each of them. First came shining spurs for the big Jul, and then a book prettily bound in blue for Paula. The third gift was something out of the ordinary—a great bow with a quiver and two feathered arrows in it. That was for Rolf. As the father took out the arrows with their sharp points he said seriously:

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"This weapon is for Rolf who knows how to use it. It is no toy. Willi and Lili must never let it enter their minds to play with it. They could hurt themselves with it very easily or badly injure someone else."

And now the father held out for Willi and Lili a splendid Noah's ark with all kinds of animals, of each kind a pair. And there was the whole Noah family, all the men having staffs for the journey while the women carried umbrellas, so much needed in going on board the ark.

At last there was a wonderfully built nut-cracker for little Hun. Its face was drawn into a grimace as though it had to deplore all the sins of this world. But when one put a nut in its great mouth which stood open as though to give a woeful howl, a turn of the screw made its sharp white teeth bite the nut open and the clean kernel was left in one's hand.

Now that the presents were distributed, there was an eager passing them from one to

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another with many new discoveries about them which led to fresh outbursts of joy.

At last the mother arose and reminded them that it was long past the children's usual bedtime. Then Mr. Birkenfeld stood up and asked in a loud voice, "Who has solved the riddle? Anyone ready?"

No one answered, for none had thought any more about it except Rolf himself.

"Then I have guessed it myself," continued the father. "The answer is *homecoming*. Is it not, Rolf? And now I touch glasses with you and express my thanks for your riddle."

While Rolf, highly pleased, stepped up to his father, there suddenly arose a cry of fright: "Fire! Fire!"

All sprang up from the table. Battist and Trine came running to the scene with buckets and bottles, and Hans ran from the stable with a pail. All rushed about screaming: "The bush is on fire! The hedge is burning!"

Pandemonium reigned.

"Dora! Dora!" called a complaining voice

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from the cottage down into the little garden below.

Hastily the little girl left her place at the hedge and ran into the house. She had been so deeply interested in all that she had seen of the merry party and what little she could hear of their conversation that she had forgotten all else. She had spent a good two hours sitting on the ground looking through the hole in the hedge.

Upstairs Aunt Ninette had hurriedly pulled her belongings out of the closets and chests she had just arranged so neatly, and everywhere great heaps were piled as if she were preparing for flight. She was running to and fro in great excitement.

"Aunt Ninette," said Dora in a tremble, for she felt she had stayed out too long, "you have nothing to fear now. See, it is quite dark in the garden over there; the fire has been put out."

Casting a quick glance in that direction, the aunt perceived this was true; everywhere it

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was quite dark, even the last little candle had been put out. She saw a dim light swinging along the pathway, as though someone were carrying a lantern out toward the apple tree. Probably a servant going out to clean up after the feast.

"Oh, this is frightful!" she exclaimed. "Who could have any suspicion that we would find such a state of things here?" bewailed the aunt. "Now go to bed, Dora. Tomorrow will decide whether we must move to other lodgings or travel to some other place."

Dora quickly withdrew into her little room but it was a long, long time before she went to sleep. She kept seeing the garden and the lights and the gleaming apple tree, and she still heard the children talking and laughing so happily as they told their father this and that, and his kind and pleasant answers. Then she thought of her own father and of the happy days when she had walked and talked with him. The sight of the joyous family over the hedge had emphasized her own loss. She

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had felt so attracted toward the children and the father and the mother that already it seemed as though it would be like a separation from some dear ones if her aunt and uncle were to go away. This thought kept her awake at first. Then the children next door seemed to stand in front of her again, their father with them, and beside him stood her own father and it seemed she heard him say consolingly:

"Yet God in loving wisdom
Keeps guard o'er us below."

With these words in mind she drifted off to slumber, to dream of the lights and the gleaming tree and the merry children under it.

The little blaze in the garden had been put out quickly and when inquiry was made Willi and Lili at once confessed it was their doings. They had conceived the idea of turning Rolf's riddle into a transparency like the motto used behind their Christmas tree each year "Glory to God in the Highest." To make these letters appear a lovely red before the company, they

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had silently slipped away and fetched two lights. Standing on a high step that had been used to hang up the inscription, they held the lights behind it. But when no one's attention was called to what they planned as a joyful surprise, Willi and Lili put the lights nearer the paper, then nearer till it flamed up in fire, catching the nearest branches. On account of it being a festive day in the family, the twins were not punished but were sent to bed immediately with a reminder that they were forbidden ever again to make the slightest experiment with fire.

Soon afterward silence reigned all through the house and peacefully the moon above looked down on the trees, the sleeping flowers and the silent garden.

CHAPTER IV

ALL SIX

"WE must move, Mrs. Kurd," were Aunt Ninette's first words as she came down to breakfast the next morning. "We seem to be in a most undesirable neighborhood. We shall have to move this very day."

Mrs. Kurd stood speechless with astonishment in the middle of the room. She gazed at Mrs. Ehrenreich as though she could not grasp the meaning of her words.

"I am in earnest, Mrs. Kurd. We must move," repeated Aunt Ninette.

"But nowhere in all Tannenberg, Mrs. Ehrenreich, can you and your husband find a better or more respectable neighborhood than we have here," at last began Mrs. Kurd, who had partly recovered from her amazement.

"But, Mrs. Kurd, can it be that you did not hear the hideous noise last evening? That is just what I had explained to you we have to avoid."

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"That was only the children, Mrs. Ehrenreich. They were having a great family party, and so things were extra lively next door."

"If family parties are celebrated like that here, first with such outbursts of joy and then followed with fire alarms and unheard-of tumult, such a neighborhood is not only noisy but also dangerous. We really must move, Mrs. Kurd."

"I do not believe the fire was a part of the festival," Mrs. Kurd assured her. "It was purely an accident, and was put out at once. There is such perfect order kept in the household over there that actually I cannot conceive how you and your husband could really wish to move on account of my neighbors. You would be certain to regret it for there are no better lodgings in all Tannenberg than mine."

Aunt Ninette calmed down a little and sat down at the breakfast table, for Uncle Titus had just appeared followed by Dora.

By this time breakfast was over in the Birkensfeld house. The father had left to attend

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to his affairs and the mother was busy about her household tasks. Rolf, who took Latin lessons every day from the worthy rector of a nearby parish, had departed and Paula was busy over her music lesson with Miss Hanenwinkel. Willi and Lili meanwhile were studying their lessons for the day. Little Hun sat at his table in the corner and gazed thoughtfully at the lamenting nutcracker that stood before him.

Now the big Jul stepped into the room with a riding whip in his hand and his new spurs on his boots. He had just come from his morning ride.

"Who'll pull off my riding boots?" he called, flinging himself into an armchair and admiring his shining spurs.

Instantly Willi and Lili darted to him, happy to have an excuse to desert their books. Without hesitation each took hold of one of the long boots and before Jul was aware of it, he was pulled off the chair, for Willi and Lili tugged with all their might. But it was not

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the boots that came off the feet; but Jul that came off his chair. Too late he clutched the arms of the chair. That tumbled over too and Jul now lustily shouted, "Stop, stop!"

When the tiny Hun saw the helpless condi-

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tion of the big Jul, he rushed up to his rescue. He seized the back of the chair and braced himself firmly, but he too slid along as though he were on a toboggan. Willi and Lili, desiring to complete their task, kept on pulling and pulling, paying no attention to Jul's cries, "Stop! Stop! Stop!" And his:

"Oh, Willi and Lili,
Stop ere you kill me!"

The little Hun screamed loudly for help and now the mother came in. Willi and Lili let go, Jul swung himself up into the chair to which he was still clinging, and little Hun swayed to and fro a few times and finally regained his balance.

"Oh, Jul, how can you make the children so wild? You ought to know better," said the mother in rebuke, "and be busy at something useful."

"Yes, mother, I know, and I soon will. But you see," he explained, "I thought I was helping you considerably in asking Willi and Lili to take off my boots. While they were occupied

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that way, I was keeping them out of mischief and any escapade they might plan."

"Jul, Jul, what nonsense! Do find something better to do," said the mother. "And you, Lili, go downstairs and practice on the piano until Miss Hanenwinkel has finished upstairs with Paula. Willi, you are to study. Jul, if you really wish to help, give attention to the youngsters in a sensible way until I come back."

Jul declared his willingness and promised to do his best. Lili hurried to the piano but as she was in a rather excited state, she fumbled over her scales. She decided that the short pieces would go better and so she started singing and playing:

"Rejoice ye in living,
While yet ye may:
Pluck ye the roses,
Ere they droop and decay."

Uncle Titus and his wife had just finished their breakfast when the uproar over Jul's boots began in the great house. Uncle Titus

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retired to his room, closed and fastened the window, while his wife called in the landlady so that she might hear just what was going on opposite. But it did not seem to make the impression on Mrs. Kurd that it did on Aunt Ninette, for she exclaimed with a smile, "Ah, they do have such merry times over there!"

When Mrs. Ehrenreich explained to her that such a noise was far from amusing to a person who was seeking to regain his health, Mrs. Kurd suggested that if the gentleman would take a little walk it might be good for him; up in the woods yonder everything was beautifully silent. But matters next door would not be like this much longer; it was merely a temporary condition. The young son was spending his holidays at home and would soon be going away again. Then resounded Lili's joy song on the piano.

"And that too! Is that also the young man who is soon going away?" asked Aunt Ninette excitedly. "There is no end to it! Every moment there comes something new and noisy.

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Is it possible, Mrs. Kurd, you don't hear it?"

"Really I have never been annoyed by it. The child plays so well that one must enjoy listening to her," was Mrs. Kurd's opinion.

"What has become of Dora all of a sudden? This neighborhood seems to have affected her already and she is getting beyond me," complained the aunt afresh. "Today she has to start in again on her work." Then lifting her voice, "Dora, Dora! Are you down below again?"

In truth Dora was down in the little garden again, at the hole in the hedge listening in rapture as Lili drummed away on the piano. She hastened to obey her aunt's summons, the shirts were taken out and a place arranged at the window where she was to sit all day at her sewing.

Just as her aunt was ready to leave the room she said, "We simply cannot stay here."

These words brought quick tears to Dora's eyes for her greatest desire was to remain right here where so much of interest was going

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on all the time round about her, and where she could watch the children now and then through the hole in the hedge as they played so happily in the garden on the other side. Dora thought and thought, pondering how she could prevent their moving, but she found no way.

In the meantime eleven o'clock had come and as Rolf hurried home he caught sight of his mother through the open kitchen door.

"Mama, mama," he called as he ran, long before he was past the door, "now you can make a guess:

'My first is—'

"My dear Rolf," his mother interrupted, "I really beg that you go find some other guesser. I have no time right now. Go to Paula. She has just stepped into the sitting-room."

Rolf obeyed.

"Paula," he cried from below stairs, "just make a guess:

'My first is the same—'

"No, Rolf; please not now!" begged Paula.

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"I am looking for my notebook. I have to use it immediately to do my French translations. Here comes Miss Hanenwinkel; she's a good guesser."

Rolf rushed up to the governess at once, beginning, "Oh, Miss Hanenwinkel, listen:

'My first is the same as—'

"No time, Rolf, no time!" insisted the governess. "There's Master Jul sitting in the corner waiting for some nuts to be cracked. Go to him! Till I see you again!"

Miss Hanenwinkel had traveled in Italy once and had appropriated this common expression, using it always in the same way on all occasions. For instance, should the scissors grinder appear, she would say: "Are you here again? Just stay where you belong. Till I see you again!" and thereupon would close the door. If a tradesman came, or a traveling peddler and she was asked to attend to him, she would say: "You know very well we need nothing. Don't come around again. Till I see you again!" and the door was closed. That was

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one of the little peculiarities of Miss Hanenwinkel.

Jul was sitting in the corner, and in front of him was the tiny Hun who was watching the despairing expressions of his nutcracker as he gave him one nut after another to crack and then divided them equally, one for big Jul, the next for himself.

Rolf stepped up to them both and began, "Jul, you have the time all right. Now give a guess:

My first is the same as double.
Here Latin saves you trouble.
My second, the schools instil it;
The successful do fulfil it.
My whole's a great man's name,
In war and state reached fame.'"

"It is surely *Bismarck*," declared the ever-ready Jul.

"Oh, how quickly you guessed that!" said Rolf in astonishment.

"Now it's my turn, Rolf. Listen, this one calls for reflection. I have just thought it out." Then with emphasis Jul declaimed:

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“My first walks garden fences,
Night music then commences.
My second's a beast of burden.
To winners is due my third one.
My whole means worst disaster;
No ill befalls one faster.’”

“That is tough,” declared Rolf, who desired time to think it out. “Just wait a bit and I’ll get it, Jul.” Therewith Rolf seated himself on a footstool to think it over more comfortably.

The big Jul and the tiny Hun kept on cracking and eating nuts and for side play Jul would throw a bit of shell at some object in the room to test his marksmanship.

“I’ve got it!” called Rolf joyfully. “It is *catsquall*.”

“Oh, Rolf, that’s absurd!” cried Jul in disgust. “It’s *catastrophe*!”

“Oh, yes, of course!” exclaimed Rolf, somewhat abashed. “But now, Jul, what is this:

‘My first is all of a shiver;
At the point of my second, deliver!
My whole’s a great poet.
So easy to guess. So go it!’”

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"*Goethe*," said Jul without a moment's hesitation.

"Aha, all wrong!" laughed Rolf. "How could my second be worked in with *Goethe*?"

"Well, there's *go* in *Goethe*."

"To think that you could not guess Shakespeare," chided Rolf. "But wait! I know another:"

'My first—'

"No, no! Spare me! Spare me! This is quite a strain. Anyhow, I must go and look after Nestor," and Jul sprang up and made a dash for the stable.

"Oh, what a pity, what a pity!" sighed Rolf. "Not a person left and here I have four more lovely riddles! You are no good at guessing, Hun; you are too little."

"Why, I can guess," declared the tiny Hun rather proudly.

"Well, then, try for once. But listen closely, do you hear? And put everything aside; you can crack nuts afterward," commanded Rolf and began:

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'My first tastes good at table,
Better still in stable.
People pass my second to and fro,
Sometimes fast and sometimes slow.
Look into the heavens any clear night,
Then my whole will greet you with delight.'

"A *nutcracker*!" suggested Hun quickly, for Jul being his paragon, he thought to have a word ready on the spur of the moment as Jul did was the main point.

"How can you be so stupid, Hun?" asked Rolf in disdain. "Think just a little! How can one drink a nut in the stable?"

"No, but you can *eat* it in the stable," asserted Hun.

"How silly! And how can a cracker go back and forth, sometimes fast and sometimes slow, Hun?"

"Well, it can," declared the little lad firmly, and tying a string to the patient nutcracker, he dragged it around the room, running as fast as he could. When his pace grew slower Rolf said, "So, young fellow, you think you are right, do you? And no one can prove

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to you what the riddle is all about. Now just gaze up into the sky—do you see any nutcracker up there?”

“No.— But it has just come down here,” insisted Hun. “Don’t you understand, Rolf?” and for proof he held his nutcracker under Rolf’s nose.

“I can’t waste any more time on you, Hun,” said Rolf, wishing to escape his little brother. But that was not so easy, for Hun had caught the fever of making riddles.

“Wait, wait, Rolf!” he cried and caught hold of Rolf’s coat. “Now it’s my turn and you must guess!”

“My first you can’t drink, but eat—”

“Ah, there comes nutcracker again!” exclaimed Rolf and ran as hard as he could to make his escape from such awful riddle making.

Hun ran nimbly after him, screaming, “You haven’t guessed it, you haven’t guessed it! Guess, Rolf, please guess!”

And now, all of a sudden, up came Willi and

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Lili at a storming pace, shouting at the top of their voices, "Rolf! Rolf! Another guess, another riddle! See! See! Now guess!"

Lili held a strip of paper before Rolf's eyes,



while Willi kept on begging: "Guess, Rolf! Guess, Rolf!"

So now the riddle maker found himself standing between two riddle fires. "Do give me a moment to guess!" he cried, swinging his arms to ward them off.

"You can't guess! I'll go give mine to Jul,"

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said Hun disparagingly and went his way.

Rolf seized the little piece of paper, all yellow with age, which Lili held out before him, and gazed at it in perplexity. He turned it over and over in his hand. Written in a child's round hand were the puzzling words:

"Thy hand
Firm
It is
But, alas!
Or stays,
Each one
And now
This page
Comes the day
Then the strips
Fit
Till we die
You and I,
Never!"

"Perhaps that is a rebus," suggested Rolf thoughtfully. "I'll read it all right if you'll just leave me alone, for I must think long and hard."

But there was little time to think about the problem it offered for just then the dinner

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bell rang and the whole family gathered about the large table in the dining-room.

"What good things has my little Hun done today?" inquired the father after they had all been served.

"I made a riddle, papa, but Rolf will never, never guess *my* riddle. And I can't find Jul, and none of the others would give me any sensible answers."

"Yes, papa," broke in Rolf eagerly, "and I have made four or five beautiful riddles, but not a soul has time to answer them and those who have the time, haven't any brains. When Jul guesses one he has exhausted his powers. I could put six riddles together every day."

"Yes, yes, papa," Willi and Lili joined in, "and we have found a riddle too. It's so difficult to guess that even Rolf can't solve it. Yes, and it is a rebus."

"If you will just wait a bit, I'll guess it all right," asserted Rolf.

"Why, it seems to me that the whole house

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is full of riddles," remarked the father. "There seems to be a riddle epidemic among us. We ought to engage someone to do nothing but solve riddles."

"Yes, if I could only find such a person!" sighed Rolf seriously. For the making of riddles for someone who would really listen to them and solve them seemed to him to be the most desirable thing on earth.

After dinner the entire family went out under the apple tree. Sitting in the happy circle, Mrs. Birkenfeld, the governess and the girls busied themselves with sewing and knitting. Even the tiny Hun toiled over a piece of goods none too clean, on which he planted great stitches of red thread; he wanted to embroider a horse cloth for Jul. The latter had a book which he had brought out at the request of his mother, for she wished him to read aloud. Rolf sat under the mountain-ash tree studying Latin, and Willi snuggled beside him. He was supposed to learn some verses, but he gazed first at the

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birds on the branches above him and then at the laborers in the fields far below and then at the red apples in the tree. For Willi loved visible things, and it was only with the greatest difficulty and then mostly with Lili's collaboration that the invisible ever got into his head. Hence his afternoon studies usually consisted of uninterrupted observation of the landscape.

Today Jul also seemed to wish to join Willi in his gazing, for he had not even opened his book, but had let his glances roam around, though they finally rested on his sister Paula.

"Paula," he said now, "this whole day long you have worn an expression as though you were a collection of vexations."

"Suppose you begin to read aloud, Jul," she retorted. "Then we will hear something better than comparisons like that, which nobody can understand."

"Suppose you do begin to read, Jul," suggested the mother. "But, Paula, I too have wondered what makes you so curt today. You have been in wretched humor and out of

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sorts for several days, and short with everybody."

"But, mama, why should I not be out of sorts? I have not a single companion in the whole of Tannenberg, or elsewhere. I have no one to confide in."

The mother suggested that Paula pass more time with her sister Lili, or that Miss Hanenwinkel would make a nice friend for her, as she was only twenty years old. But Paula declared that the former was too young and the latter too old, for to Paula twenty seemed an advanced age. For true companionship two persons should be of the same age and they must have the same ambitions and hold the same ideals; they must give allegiance one to another and must never consent to separation. "And if one does not find such a friend, there can be no true happiness, because one cannot share everything, both thoughts and experiences, with just anybody," she often declared.

"Paula has entered the period of romance,"

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said Jul seriously. "For some time she has looked upon every strawberry girl as likely to draw out a hidden flag and announce herself as a Maid of Orleans. Each earth grubber's hands must be scanned, for he might wear a signet ring on the little finger and be searching, like a hunted Vasa, for his lost kingdom."

"Don't tease so, Jul," came the mother's rebuke. "It is quite true that there is something very lovely about such an ardent companionship as Paula longs for. I have experienced it myself and those days are still my most delightful memories."

"Oh, tell us again the story of your friend Lili, mama," begged Paula, who had heard the story related several times, but to whom this friendship appealed as ideal. Lili joined in the entreaty, and with greater urgency, for she did not know about this friend of her mother's whose name she bore.

"Is it not true that I am called Lili because that is your friend's name?" she asked, and

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the mother assured her that it was solely on account of this friend that she had so named her.

"All of you know the long factory building at the foot of the mountain, with the beautiful dwelling beside it in the great shady garden," the mother began. "Lili lived there, and well do I remember how it came about that I first saw her.

"I was about six years old and was playing in the rectory garden with my simple little dolls. I had seated them on the ground on the flat stones which I dug up everywhere to make nice seats for my dolls. I did not have a full equipment of doll furniture with armchairs and sofas like you have now. As you know, your grandfather was rector of Tannenberg and our life in the rectory was very simple. My playmates, a couple of children in the neighborhood, stood around me, looking on without saying a word, for that was their way. They did not show the interest in my play which, according to my

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views, they should have done. For the most part they only stared with wide-open eyes, to see if it was something new or something



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old, something common or something unusual, that I brought out.

“On that particular evening, as I squatted on the ground, seating my little dolls in a circle, a lady stepped into the garden and asked for my father. Before I could give an answer, the child who was holding her hand ran over to me, knelt on the ground and began to inspect everything. I had flat stones for the dollies to sit on, and back of each I had stuck up another stone, making the back of a chair on which the dolly could lean. This pleased the little girl so much that she started at once to play with the dolls in the liveliest manner. I was so attracted by her bobbing curls, her charming ways, her pretty and refined language that I forgot everything else. I looked on in enchantment until the lady again inquired for my father.

“From that day Lili and I were inseparable chums and for me a beautiful, eventful life started in Lili’s house, such as I had never dreamed could be. As long as I live I shall

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never forget the long blissful days I spent in that lovely house, where I shared as second daughter the love of the father and mother. Lili's parents came from the north of Germany. Her father had purchased the factory at the foot of the mountain and expected to remain there always. Lili was their only child, and as we grew to be such close friends and understood each other so well, it was happiness to be together. We were seldom separated and soon felt we could not get along without each other.

"Lili's parents were so kind! They often begged my parents, as a special favor, to allow me to live with Lili for a time. I made long visits in their hospitable house, and to me such times seemed like great uninterrupted festivals that we were celebrating. And such magnificent toys as Lili had! I had never seen their like in all my life! Never to be forgotten are the little dolls she had. We would play with them all day long, for among them all each of us had a large family, every member

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of which we knew by name and character. We lived their lives with them, and their experiences filled us now with joy and now with sorrow. I always returned to the rectory rich in presents after each prolonged visit, and soon there came a renewed invitation to return.

“Later we studied together, first under the teacher and then under my father, keeping the same school hours. And then we began to read together, sharing our heroes and heroines, who filled our minds as completely as had the dolls before. Oh, how we lived through all the experiences that came to our story-heroes! And what fire and life, what freshness and vivacity, there was in my joyful Lili, with her flying brown curls and laughing eyes!

“Thus we lived in unclouded happiness through the years without any presentiment that our precious companionship could ever end. Then, all of a sudden—we were between eleven and twelve years old—my father said

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to me, and I still remember the place in the garden where the crushing words were spoken, that Mr. Blank, Lili's father, was going to leave the factory and return to Germany. As far as I could understand, Mr. Blank had not been correctly informed about the business from the very beginning; it had not been going well and now he was obliged to give it up at a great loss. My father was very sad and declared Mr. Blank had been treated very unjustly, and that he had lost his entire fortune.

"I was crushed! That I should lose Lili and that she should be poor were two things that seemed to choke me, and for a long time all happiness was gone. On the following day Lili came to say good-bye. At first we wept pitifully, for it seemed that we could not endure being separated from each other. Then we pledged eternal fidelity and determined to do everything possible to meet again. Lastly we sat down and composed a little piece of poetry—we had made many verses together

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before. We cut our poem apart down the middle and each took half, for it was to serve as a bond to hold us and if we met again it was to be fitted together, as a sign of our reunion.

“Lili journeyed away. For several years we wrote to one another frequently and with great fervor. Her letters to me were the sole comfort in my uniformly quiet country life. When we had grown to be sixteen- or seventeen-year-old girls Lili wrote to me that her father had decided to emigrate to America. She promised to write to me as soon as they had settled down, but I never received another letter from her. Whether her letters went astray, or she did not write because the family never really settled anywhere, or whether she concluded that our ways lay so far apart as never to cross again, I do not know. Perhaps she is long since dead—that is also possible. For many years I mourned for my first, dearest, never-to-be-forgotten friend to whom I was so deeply indebted. I have always sought

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for her, asking everywhere in the hope of obtaining any news of her, but in vain. I never succeeded in discovering a trace of her."

The mother stopped speaking, a sad expression on her face. The children were depressed at the story, and each sighed, "Oh, what a pity! What a pity!" But the little Hun, who had listened more attentively than all the others, clung closely to his mother, saying consolingly: "Don't feel so sad, mama! Listen! When I'm grown up I'll go right over to America and bring Lili back to you."

Rolf and Lili had drawn near to listen to the story and now Rolf said, as he gazed thoughtfully for some time at a piece of paper he held, "Mama, was the poem that you cut in half written to read like a rebus on a narrow strip of paper?"

"It might well be that it would make such an impression," replied the mother. "But why do you ask me?"

"Look, mama," said Rolf, and he held out

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the strip of yellow paper. "Don't you think that might be one of the halves?"

"Why, Rolf! It is, indeed!" cried the mother, greatly excited. "I thought I had lost the paper long ago. I kept it safely for many years, and then suddenly I could not find it. For a long, long time I have supposed it lost forever. I have not thought of it for years until today when I began to relate the story of the child companionship. Where did you find the precious keepsake, Rolf?"

"We found it!" triumphantly cried out Willi and Lili together. "We found it in the old family Bible! We wanted to have another look at Eve," explained Willi.

"To see if her face was still scratched all over!" announced Lili, eager to share in the statement.

"Ah, yes! That likewise is a reminder of my Lili," said the mother, smiling. "She did that in her excitement one day when we had been letting our imaginations picture how lovely it must have been to have been seated

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in the middle of Paradise. She became so enraged at Eve for eating the apple that she scratched her face with a lead pencil in punishment. But my old poem! I can't piece it out," said the mother, after carefully studying over the unfinished lines. "It is so long ago. Just think of it, children! Over thirty years!"

Mrs. Birkenfeld now laid the strip of paper carefully in her workbasket and requested the children to gather up their things and follow her to the house, for it was very nearly time the table should be set for supper and the father was very punctual in his habits. So there was a hurried packing up and, one after the other, they wandered toward the house, disappearing through the triumphal arch which was still standing.

Dora had been looking through the hole in the hedge for some time, watching the group as they listened to the story being told under the apple tree. Now when they withdrew one after the other, she was able to scrutinize each child one by one. And when they were all gone,

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Dora took a deep breath and said to herself: "Oh, if I could only go over into their garden just once!"

At the supper table Aunt Ninette said: "At last we have had a few hours without some deafening noise. If things could only continue that way, it might still be possible for us to go on staying here. What do you think, my dear Titus?"

Dora waited breathlessly for the answer.

"The air in these rooms is very close, and I feel more dizziness here than back in Karlsruhe," declared the uncle.

Dora dropped her eyes to her plate in disappointment, and had no more appetite. Aunt Ninette broke out into loud lamentations. Suppose the whole journey and the stay here should prove utterly useless for her husband! Perhaps it would have been best to have moved the first day. At last she consoled herself with the thought that perfect quiet might continue in the other household so that their windows might be opened on the morrow.

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Dora quickly grasped at this hope, for as long as they lived near by there remained the possibility that some time, somehow, even if only once, she might play with the children in their flower-scented garden.

CHAPTER V

BEFORE AND AFTER THE FLOOD

THERE were times when little Hun was brimming over with energy and then he would wander from one room to another seeking something to do. When he would beg assistance in some activity, each would send him off to someone else with the words, "Go along! I am busy with this task." His mother invariably suggested that he go to his little desk and occupy himself there until she could find time to devote to him.

Saturdays were often such restless days for Hun, and the day following the event just related was Saturday. The house was being cleaned, the rooms were topsy turvy, and even the halls were blocked with furniture. For quite a while Hun wandered from stool to armchair, and back to stool—the house seemed in as unsettled a state as the little lad himself.

He made a long search for his mother and

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at last succeeded in finding her on the upper floor, but she was busy gathering together the laundry for Monday and sent him downstairs again. "Go and find Paula. Perhaps she is free now," said she.

Hun found his sister at the piano.

"Run along, Hun! I have to practice now and I can't answer your riddles," for her little brother wanted to ask the one about the nut-cracker again. Hun had a bad case of the riddle fever, caught from Rolf. "There goes Miss Hanenwinkel; go to her!"

"Miss Hanenwinkel, my first one cannot drink, but eat," cried out the youngster as the governess approached.

"No, Hun; please spare me," the lady interrupted hurriedly. "I don't know what's going to happen if you too begin riddle making. I have no time for it. Look, Master Jul is just dismounting from his horse. Take your riddle to him."

The youngster started off to meet his brother.

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"Jul, no one will guess my riddle, Miss Hanenwinkel least of all," he complained to the newcomer. "She says you should solve it."

"Well, what is it all about? Let's go to it," said Jul.

"My first you cannot drink, but eat," began Hun, but stopped at that.

"Good, Hun, but continue, continue!" urged his big brother.

"You have to make up the rest. You see, Jul, the answer is *nutcracker*," explained the little boy.

"Yes, I can see that very clearly, brother. But come along! As Miss Hanenwinkel sent you to me to guess your riddle, I'll send her one through you. Now I'll repeat it to you, and you must learn it by heart. Then off you go, to pass it on to Miss Hanenwinkel to guess."

Jul now seated himself, the youngster standing up in front of him, and repeated slowly the following several times:

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“When little Huns make their first crow,
Into the second they must go.*
'Till I see you again; then the *duo*.'”

It took only a little while for the small boy to master the lines, and he ran off eagerly to deliver them to the lady.

Miss Hanenwinkel was in the schoolroom and was endeavoring to explain a difficult problem in arithmetic to the twins. She was having more trouble than usual, for this morning the two were scatterbrains, their minds anywhere but on their lessons. And then in stepped Hun.

“A riddle, Miss Hanenwinkel!” he announced.

“No, absolutely no! This is no time to bring your riddle here, Hun,” replied the governess with determination.

But this time little Hun was backed by the big Jul, and that gave him courage. Without taking a step back, he declared repeatedly, “Jul made it! Jul made it!”

*Hanenwinkel means *cock's corner*.

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"Well, then, hurry up and tell me your riddle quickly," said the governess, relenting a little.

Standing proudly before them, Hun now recited his riddle in a loud clear voice.

Miss Hanenwinkel was not to be outdone; she came from Bremen and always had a ready answer. Instantly she sat down at the table, took up pen and paper and wrote rapidly:

"Nuts get ripe in my first.
My whole their shells does burst.
For my second there's no need at all—
On the floor the pieces fall.
I suppose we must not grumble
If over them by chance we stumble."

"There! Take this to Master Jul," she said as she handed the paper to the little fellow. "Tell him that since he has written a riddle around my name, I cannot let him get ahead of me and so I am sending him one. But now, Hun, don't come back again. The twins have much to do this morning and we cannot be disturbed."

Willi and Lili did not seem to be afraid of such a possibility. It was plain to see they

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were in no mood for further study. During the moments the governess was talking to the little fellow, the pair shifted closer and closer to one another until their heads were together and it was very apparent that important plans were being worked out. Whatever they were, they engrossed their minds so completely they could not do even the simplest of sums, and finally Miss Hanenwinkel, convinced of it, closed her book with a sigh and declared that if the figures were just so many silly ad-

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ventures, Willi and Lili would grasp them without hesitation. This statement of their governess was really founded on fact, for the twins had surprising ability in conceiving and carrying out all manner of mischievous plans. In fact, they seemed to have something of this kind in mind just then, and as soon as the lesson came to an end they rushed with enterprising eagerness to the laundry, where they held a secret consultation concerning the larger and smaller washtubs.

At the table at noon Jul pulled out a sheet of paper and asked, "Who can solve an excellent riddle which Miss Hanenwinkel has composed?" and then read it aloud.

He had scarcely finished when Rolf called out, "*Julius!*"* in answer, "and that's quite right about the nuts."

The solution was correct but Miss Hanenwinkel did not read the riddle Jul had sent to her, for she had no desire to have her

*The letter "j" is given the y sound.

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personal peculiarities made the subject of a joke.

Directly after the meal Willi and Lili ran back to the laundry, for Saturday afternoon was a holiday and they were free to do as they pleased. True, it was the duty of the governess to know what was going on, but seeing the twins enter the laundry, she took it for granted it was their plan to wash some dolls' clothing, as that was a favorite occupation, and she was much pleased to have them busy for a few hours.

But Willi and Lili had mightier ideas than doll washing. They had amused themselves the last day or two with the lovely Noah's Ark their father had brought them. In their play they had entered so fully into the wonderful life of Noah and all who were preserved on the ark that Lili had conceived the plan of carrying out an ark voyage on her own account. This idea had met with Willi's enthusiastic approval. They had already thought out the necessary preparations in a very purposeful

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manner. Practical Lili knew just how this and that was to be done.

Among the different washtubs was a middle-sized one. Willi and Lili selected it for an ark. The animals would find room if carefully arranged and if they would sit still in their places.

The ark-creatures, of course, must be Schnurri and Philomele. Both of them were called and enticed. Schnurri growled at the invitation but Philomele rubbed herself caressingly around Lili's legs, and the little girl took her up in her arms, saying, "You are much better behaved, little Philomele, than old Schnurri!"

The facts in the case were that Philomele had gotten her name from her very melodious mewing and Schnurri had gotten his because he was always snarling and growling. But there was good reason for this. The two had been commanded to live as friends, never hurting one another. Schnurri carried out his master's orders and was at all times peaceable

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and polite to Philomele. When they had their dinner from out of the same dish, he ate very slowly because he knew the cat, with her little mouth, could not eat as fast as he with his big one. On the contrary, Philomele was friendly and affectionate toward Schnurri so long as anyone was near. But let them be alone and she would suddenly raise her paw and before the dog knew what was coming she had given him a clawing behind the ear. Schnurri would snarl and because this was happening pretty nearly all the time he was constantly snarling. Hence his name. It was unjust to the dog, for by nature he was friendly and peace-loving.

And now the water for the voyage of the ark had to be obtained. Lili knew very well that when the washing was being done a long wooden gutter was laid to lead the water from the pipe at the spring, which was in front of the laundry, to a washtub. The flow kept the tub full. And now according to Lili's calculations if the gutter were to lead from the spring to the floor of the laundry,

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where the tub stood, the floor would soon be covered with water. It would keep rising a little at a time, higher and higher, until it lifted the tub off the floor and there you had a floating ark. This had all been thought out. But how could one get the long gutter which was a prime necessity?

Willi and Lili weighed the pros and cons as to whom to apply for aid in their undertaking. Should they ask Battist? Or should they go to Trine?

Between the aged Battist and the young Trine there existed the same relations as between Schnurri and Philomele. Battist had served in the Birkenfeld family for many years and was called upon for advice in all matters for he understood all the affairs, whether of the house, the stable or the farm, better than anyone else. The respect accorded Battist by the family annoyed Trine not a little. Although not many years in the house herself, her aunt had worked there from youth into old age. Now Trine was taking her place

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while she was given a rest. Thus Trine considered she had ancient rights in the house and Battist ought not to lord it over her. Before the members of the family she was invariably polite to him, but behind their backs she picked at him whenever she could, just the way Philomele did with Schnurri.

The children were aware how matters stood between the two servants and had often taken advantage of the situation for their own ends. Willi and Lili would have preferred to apply to Trine for aid on their ark venture, for she had both ingenuity and keen perception, while Battist did not lend himself to novel or unusual undertakings. But the object they now required was under his particular management. Therefore Lili determined to call on Battist for assistance while Willi held on to the dog and cat to prevent their escape.

Lili found Battist on the threshing floor sorting out all kinds of seeds. She took her stand in front of him, clasping her hands behind her back, striking the same attitude as her

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father when he stood before his workmen to issue orders.

"Battist," she began with determination, "where is the gutter they use to let the water run from the spring into the tub?"

Battist looked up from his seed sorting and



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let his gaze rest on Lili for a while as if he were waiting for the question to be repeated. Battist was always suspicious. Then he inquired, "Did your mama send you here?"

"No. I came on my own account. I want it for myself," explained Lili sturdily.

"Well, then I don't know where the gutter is," returned Battist.

"But, Battist," persevered Lili, "I only want a little water from the spring. Why can't I have it?"

"I know you two rascals," growled Battist. "First it is a little fire, and then it is a little water. Always some mischief. I've nothing for you, I've nothing for you!"

"It's all the same to me," said Lili defiantly, leaving him to go directly to the kitchen where Trine was scrubbing the floor.

"Trine," began Lili coaxingly, "come along and give us the water gutter. Battist refuses to let us have it a few minutes. But you'll give it to us, won't you?"

"Why, of course," consented Trine. "You

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may have a little water. But you must wait till the old bear goes away. Then I'll go along with you."

After a while Trine saw Battist crossing the lawn. He passed the house and went down into the field.

"Now come along," she said, took Lili by the hand and, running to the laundry, she drew the gutter from its hiding place with her strong young arms. She laid one end under the pipe and rested the other end in a small tub. Then she explained to Lili that when there was enough water in the tub she and Willi together could push it on one side. When they wanted more water they could lay it under the pipe again. Now she must hurry back to her work.

Trine went off and now the voyage could begin. The gutter was taken from the tub and the end placed on the laundry floor. Lili got aboard; Willi followed her. Then Philomele was lifted up and Schnurri pulled in.

Now everything was safe in the excellently

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built ark. There sat Noah and his wife joyful over their rescue and the lovely voyage on the rising waters, for the stream from the spring flowed steadily into the laundry. Soon the water stood fairly high above the ground. And then—actually—the ark was lifted and began to float. Noah and his wife shouted with joy. It had actually come to pass—the ark floated back and forth on the real flood!

From the outside ground level one had to go down several stone steps to get into the laundry so that there was room for a considerable quantity of water. It rose higher and ever higher. The twins began to feel a little uneasy.

“See, see, Willi, we can’t get out any more!” exclaimed Lili. “And it’s getting higher and higher all the time.”

Willi peered over the rim of the tub and said seriously, “If it would only stop rising! Otherwise we will all drown.”

But the water rose higher and higher.

Schnurri now grew restless and jumped

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about, thereby making the tub rock fearfully. Indeed it threatened to founder. By this time the water was so deep that the children did



not dare to leap out into it and a sudden panic seized them, and both of them began to scream at the top of their voices: "We are drowning! We are drowning! Mama! Mama! Battist!

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Trine! We are drowning!" At last in their fright they gave forth wordless screams. Schnurri barked and howled in company, but Philomele bit and scratched and caterwauled with rage, for now they both began to show their true characters. Philomele did not want to get out into the water; neither did she wish to stay in the tub, so she behaved like a savage and snapped and nipped and scratched whomever she could.

Then the faithful Schnurri, understanding that all his howling had brought no help, made a great spring into the water, swam to the door, gave himself a great shake and ran off. But the children's screams only increased, for in jumping out Schnurri had almost upset the tub.

Dora had long since run down to the hole in the hedge to see what was the cause of all this calamitous shrieking.

The laundry stood close to the hedge, but she could see nothing except the gutter through which the water was silently flowing into the

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laundry. When she heard the twins' cries about drowning she sped up the cottage stairs.

"Auntie, auntie!" she cried, breathless with fright. "There are two children drowning over there! Do you hear them? Do you hear them?"

Aunt Ninette had heard, had closed all the windows, but the screams had forced their way through.

"Oh, goodness! What is it all about?" cried the aunt in greatest fright. "Of course I heard the distressing cries—I heard all that noise. But who is drowning?" Then raising her voice, "Mrs. Kurd! Mrs. Kurd!"

In the meanwhile the wet Schnurri ran in great leaps and bounds to the carriage house where Battist was trimming bean poles. The dog leaped up on him, pulled at his trousers, barked violently, tugged at him again and then tore around, howling unceasingly.

"What's happened?" asked Battist, and put a couple of bean poles on his shoulder, for he thought to himself, "One can never tell

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what may be needed." Then he followed Schnurri, who jumped around happily in front of him until they reached the laundry. Everybody had hastened to the spot: the mother, the governess, Jul, Paula, Rolf, the tiny Hun, and last of all Trine. For by this time the cries of the children had penetrated every nook and corner of the garden as well as every room of the house.

Battist stretched his long, long poles above

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the flood, right over to the floating tub.

"Now catch hold of them and hold on tight!" he called out to the twins, and thus drew the whole ark toward him and finally lifted all inmates out on dry land.

Willi and Lili were white as chalk from the fright they had passed through and at first it was impossible to get a word out of them concerning their escapade. The mother took each by the hand and led them to a bench under the apple tree and gave them time to grow calm. Then she said: "Oh, you naughty twins, sometime you will meet your death with a prank like this!"

Meanwhile the aged Battist had rolled up his trousers, stepped into the deep water and opened up all the drains so that the flood could subside. To Trine, standing near by, he said in scorn: "This happened because you have no more sense than the seven-year-olds!" for he had quickly guessed who had given them the gutter.

Trine dared not answer but, catlike, made

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ready to deliver a retaliating blow.

And now while they were all sitting safely and quietly under the apple tree Philomele came along with her tail up and purred caressingly as she rubbed against Lili's legs, offering to be friends again. But Lili pushed her aside, continuing to stroke the wet Schnurri tenderly as he lay on the ground. Willi petted the dog too and whispered to Lili the suggestion that they give Schnurri all their supper. Lili was quite in accord with this plan for in their dire extremity they had learned the true character of both their pets.

Little Hun had been looking thoughtfully at the two rescued ones and now went up to Jul, who had been pacing to and fro on the gravel path.

"Jul," asked the youngster solemnly, "how could the naughty twins meet their death with a prank?"

"That might happen in several ways, Hun," answered Jul, pausing in front of the little fellow. "You see they have tried fire and

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water already. In one of their thoughtless moments they may next bring the whole house down on us. Then we'll all lie beneath and everything will be over."

"Can't we still jump from under?" inquired Hun, much perplexed.

"If the twins didn't get the notion in the middle of the night, Hun."

"Just wake me then!" ordered Hun of his brother.

Mrs. Kurd had heard the threefold cry of distress—Aunt Ninette's, Willi's and Lili's—and had hurried upstairs at the instant that Battist had pulled the ark to safety and the screaming had stopped.

"Did you hear that, Mrs. Kurd? It was frightful! But now everything is quiet, so I suppose they were saved," said Aunt Ninette.

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Kurd in composure, "it was only the youngsters who screamed out a little. There is no danger."

"I never in my life heard such screeches. My limbs are still shaking! Oh, I wonder how

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your uncle ever stood it!" Aunt Ninette said, turning to Dora. Then to Madam Kurd, "This, Mrs. Kurd, is enough. We are going to move. This is the last straw."

Therewith Aunt Ninette stepped into her husband's room to see how he had taken these last proceedings. Mr. Titus did not hear his wife as she entered for he had stuffed his ears with cotton at the beginning of the noisy outbreak, which had disturbed him even through the closed window. Afterwards he had gone on quietly writing.

"For goodness' sake, Titus," his wife exclaimed as she came nearer and discovered what he had done. "That is very unhealthy and heats your head," and she quickly plucked the cotton out of his ears. Then she told him her plans, on which she had firmly determined: Tomorrow, after the morning church service, when the village rector was free they would pay him a call and ask his advice about another lodging. *That* was settled.

Mr. Titus fully agreed with all that his wife

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said and she went back to her room to complete her plans.

Dora lingered in the hallway while the two were talking and when the aunt came out



and closed the door behind her, she asked anxiously, "Are we really going, auntie?"

"Most certainly!" answered the aunt. "Monday morning we leave this house."

Dora crept into her little room and seated herself dejectedly on her bed. She was in despair that they should be leaving here with-

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out having met the children in their lovely garden. And to think that she must return to Karlsruhe and her tedious shirt sewing and never, never come back again to watch the happy doings of those merry children! In her keen suffering, Dora gazed disconsolately at the floor, so that she did not see her five bright stars, and how they gleamed down on her as though they would call out to her: "Dora, Dora! Have you forgotten altogether your father's little verse?"

CHAPTER VI

A TERRIBLE DEED

SUNDAY was a bright sunshiny day. All was silent in the beautiful garden. No sound was to be heard except when some red apple fell, for they were beginning to ripen. Mr. and Mrs. Birkenfeld, Paula, and Miss Hanenwinkel had gone to church. Jul and Hun sat peacefully in the living-room, a great bowl full of hazelnuts before them, talking over the different ways in which the nutcracker understood how to bite. After their lively experience of the day before, Willi and Lili had returned to their ark with its wooden men and women, and were now in the schoolroom with it, where the great table could be devoted to the numerous toys. Rolf had gone off to a distant corner of the garden where stood an isolated summer house in order to carry on his studies without interruption.

Up in the schoolroom after the flood—

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which this time had to get along without any water—had continued for some length of time and the dove had returned with the olive branch, Lili wearied of the play and began to cast about for something new to do.

"Willi, let's go downstairs," she suggested. "Let's go look at Rolf's bow and arrow. He left it down in the hall last night."

Willi was quite willing to change their play, and they both hurried down the stairs. His twin knew exactly the corner in which Rolf had placed his bow. Correct! There it stood and alongside it was the quiver with its two feathered arrows.

"Just look how it works," said Lili. "One draws this string back and places the arrow in front—thus. Then one lets go the string and instantly the arrow shoots off at a terrible rate. I saw exactly how Rolf did it. Let's try it, Willi."

"But we must not shoot with it. You know, Lili, papa said so," objected Willi.

"I do not mean to shoot, but only to try,"

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declared Lili. "You know—just to see how it is done."

The idea pleased Willi.

"But how can we try it?" he asked. "There is no room here in the passage."

"No, of course not. But I know where—out in the garden. Come along!" And Lili ran ahead with the quiver while Willi followed with the bow until they reached an open spot close to the hedge.

"Right here," declared Lili. "Come, both of us together will try how it goes."

Willi came up with the bow, and they pressed it into the ground. Then with all their might both pulled at the string, and, sure enough, it sprang in place and stood steady. Lili screamed with joy at their success.

"Now the bow must be picked up," she ordered. "So! Now put the arrow on it, Willi, d'ye see? And next you pull the thing back. Then you'll see how jolly it goes; just try!"

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WILLI TRIED, DREW IT BACK, THEN—WITH A WHIZ—THE ARROW
SPED INTO THE HEDGE.

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Willi tried, drew it back, then—with a whiz—the arrow sped into the hedge, and that same instant came a pitiful cry from the other side. Then all was quiet.

The surprised children gazed at one another in alarm.

“Do you think it was a little rabbit that cried so?” asked Willi.

“Or do you think it may have been a partridge?” suggested Lili.

Both of them were conscience-stricken and a great fear entered their hearts for they knew full well they had been disobedient in using the bow and arrows. Though both had the impression that the cry of pain was that of a child, they hoped the other had heard it differently and that it might have been a little animal. Much subdued, and without another word, they carried the bow back to its place. Now, however, a new dread came over them—there was an arrow missing from the quiver. If Rolf should discover this loss! And then to their dismay they heard the others return-

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ing from the church service. They could not even go back to the garden and recover the arrow, for if they did their deed would come to light at once. Rolf, it is true, did not know who had shot it. But if he should ask them? They did not see how to help themselves out of their predicament. They were so involved in their disobedience that it did not seem to them they would dare to tell the truth if anybody asked them about the arrow.

In perfect silence and greatly depressed by the knowledge of their guilt, the twins crept back to the schoolroom and there sat motionless, making no audible sound until they were summoned to dinner.

They came into the dining-room silently, looked at the dinner table with no happy expectations, and seated themselves with downcast eyes. They nearly choked as they gulped down their soup, as though there were pebbles in it. Not once did they raise their eyes throughout the entire meal, and when their father spoke to them, which was several

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times, their answers were scarcely audible.

"What is the matter with those two?" he asked at last, for it was quite clear to him this depression did not follow yesterday's adventure. An expression of repentance never lasted that long with the twins. He received no answer to his question. The two sat as though glued to their chairs, staring down at their plates. The mother shook her head thoughtfully while little Hun kept a watchful eye on the pair for he had guessed from the first that something had gone wrong with them.

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Then came the delicious pudding with its tempting sauce, and the mother put a generous serving on each plate.

Suddenly the father jumped up from his chair, saying, "What ever is the matter? Is someone seriously sick at the cottage? The doctor just went by in such a hurry that someone must be in danger."

"I know of no one being ill," replied the mother. "Mrs. Kurd has rented her rooms to some strangers. Perhaps it is one of them."

The twins turned red as fire and then white as chalk with fear. Their consciences warned them, "Now you'll be found out! Now it's coming!" Fear paralyzed them; they could not move a limb. Their pudding remained untouched, though the most tempting of raisins stared out at them. Even young Hun, who never tired of puddings, left his slice untouched and suddenly sprang out of his chair like one crazy, crying, "Mama! Papa! Come! It's all tumbling down!" Nearly tear-

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ing Jul out of his chair he flew to the door with, "Come! Come! It's all tumbling down! Jul said it would! Oh, dear, Jul told me it would!"

"An evil spirit must surely possess our children," said the father in astonishment. "The twins look as though they sat on the martyr's bench and tiny Hun acts as if he were plumb crazy."

Suddenly understanding what had come over his little brother, Jul burst out into laughter. Hun had read the puzzling shyness and silence of the twins as arising from the fact that they had started the work of destruction, and now the house would tumble about the heads of the entire family. Between gales of mirth Jul explained what had called forth Hun's cries of fear, but it was in vain his mother tried to bring the boy back into the room with calming words. He jumped up and down outside the front door and besought them to come outside—mama and papa—Jul, all of them. At last his father ordered the

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door closed, and declared that the dinner should be ended in peace.

Afterward, when they all wandered out into the garden, one after the other, little Hun went running too and when he saw them all safely under the apple tree, he said dolefully, "Oh, if only someone would bring out my pudding before the house tumbles to pieces!"

The mother drew him close to her side and explained to him how foolish both the big Jul and little Hun had been: the first in inventing such a nonsensical story and the second in believing it. She made him see for himself how utterly impossible it would be for two little people like Willi and Lili to tear down a great stone house, but it took quite a while to banish the impression from his mind.

Dora had been standing at the hedge, hoping that the children might come into the garden, when Willi and Lili ran out of the house with the bow. She was deeply interested in the progress of their undertaking as she looked at them through the hole. There, the arrow sped

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off! The sharp point of it pierced Dora's bare arm and she screamed aloud with the pain. The arrow fell immediately to the ground, not having entered deep enough to hold; but the blood streamed down over the arm, hand and clothes, making Dora forget the pain in her fright. Her first thought was, "How Aunt Ninette will scold! How she will wail!" In her anxiety she sought some way to conceal the injury. She pulled out her handkerchief, bound it around the wound as tightly as she could and ran to the spring in front of the cottage to wash off the blood stains. But the blood soaked through the handkerchief and Dora was soon covered with stains.

Now came the summons from above, "Dora! Dora!"

It was the aunt. So it had to be; Dora had to go to her. Trembling with fear, she went upstairs and stood before her aunt, stretching out the bandaged arm in front of her because it was dripping with blood. The light Sunday dress was covered with blotches of blood, and

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there were streaks of it on forehead and cheeks, for in trying to clean it off, Dora had spread it everywhere.

"Merciful Heavens!" screamed the aunt at the sight. "Dora, what has happened to you? What a sight! Speak! Did you fall? You are pale as death under the streaks of blood. Dora, for Heaven's sake, speak!"

Several times Dora had wanted to explain but had been unable to interrupt. Now she said timidly, "It was an arrow."

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Then followed such an outburst of woe as Dora had never yet heard. Aunt Ninette wrung her hands and ran back and forth. "An arrow! An arrow!" she screamed time after time. "Shot, then! Shot in the arm! You will be lamed! Your arm will stay stiff! Oh, you'll be crippled for life! You won't be able to sew any more, or do anything else! You'll be in actual want! We'll all suffer from it! Every evil breaks over our heads! How shall we continue to live? What shall we do if you are lame?"

"Oh, auntie," now sobbed Dora, "perhaps it will not be so terrible as all that. You remember papa always said:

'Yet God in loving wisdom,
Keeps guard o'er us below.'"

"Ah, yes, that is all very true, but if you are crippled, you are crippled," continued the aunt, wailing. "The case is desperate. But come, go; no, come here to the water. Oh, *where* is Mrs. Kurd? Someone must go after a doctor!"

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Dora went over to her wash basin while the aunt ran off to find Mrs. Kurd and to beg her to send for a doctor at once, who must come without any delay; it was a shot wound and no one could tell what the danger might be.

The physician came as quickly as he could. He examined the wound, stopped the bleeding and made a tight bandage, all without saying a word, though Aunt Ninette made several efforts to obtain some information from him. He took up his hat and started for the door.

"But, doctor, tell me, tell me, doctor, will the arm be lame? Will it be stiff for life?" she asked, as she accompanied him even beyond the door.

"Let us hope not! I'll come again tomorrow," was the answer, and the doctor was gone.

"Let us hope not!" repeated Aunt Ninette in a tone full of despair. "From a doctor that means, 'Yes, of course.' I understand! Oh, what is ever going to become of us, what shall

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we do, how will we get through?" And she did not cease her wailing until late in the evening.

That night when Mrs. Birkenfeld stepped into Willi's room to pray with him, she did not find him sitting happily on his bed waiting for her as usual. Generally he tried to detain her for a pleasant chat, but tonight he sat crouched down, and did not look up at her or say one word as she seated herself beside him.

"Willi, what is the matter with you?" asked his mother. "Something is troubling you. Have you been into some mischief again?"

Willi made an indistinct sound that was neither yes nor no.

"Come, say your evening prayer, Willi. Perhaps it will open your heart," suggested his mother.

Willi began:

"The moon on high is sailing
And myriad stars are trailing
Across the pathway of the sky,"

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and Willi prayed on, but his heart was not in his prayer as usual. He paused to listen to every sound outside, and he kept glancing shyly at the door as if something dreadful might enter. One could see by his restless looks all that he was enduring. Thus he came to the end of his hymn:

“Give rest to us while sleeping,
And hold in thy safe keeping
All those who suffering lie.”

Then suddenly Willi broke out into a fit of loud weeping and clinging to his mother he sobbed out, “The child won’t ever sleep again and God will punish us fearfully!”

“Why, what do you mean, Willi?” asked his mother. “Come, dear, tell me what has happened. I’ve known all day long that you have been in some mischief. What was it?”

“We have—we have—perhaps we have shot a child,” at last he burst forth.

“Willi, what is it you are saying?” exclaimed the shocked mother, for she instantly called to mind how during their dinner hour

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the doctor had run by the house. "But that is not possible! Tell me quite plainly everything that happened."

Then Willi related from the beginning what they had done, and how, when they had heard



the cry of pain, they ran away. And now both of them were so filled with fear they would rather die at once than live on like this.

"Now you see, Willi, what comes of disobedience," said the mother seriously. "You thought it amounted to nothing just to play a

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bit with the bow, but father knew very well the danger there might be and strictly forbade it. We do not know what sad things your disobedience has brought about, but we will now pray to the dear God with all our hearts that he will turn to good all the wickedness you have done."

And the mother began to pray, and so did Willi. Never in his life had he prayed so fervently as he did now. He could hardly stop, for it was such relief to know that he could open his heart and lay all his fear and trouble before the Lord and humbly beg for forgiveness and help. And then Willi was able to look into his mother's eyes and say good-night with a lighter heart.

In the room opposite Lili was waiting for her mother. As she stepped up to the child's bed, she said seriously, "Do you wish to pray, Lili?"

The little girl began, but stopped. Then she started again, but broke down in the middle. In extreme anguish she exclaimed, "Mama, I

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cannot pray! The Lord is angry with me."

"What have you done, Lili, that you know the good Lord is angry with you?"

Lili was silent, and picked at the sheet, for she had an obstinate little head.

"If the good Lord is dissatisfied with you, I am too. Now go to sleep if you can," said her mother, turning to leave the room.

"Mama," cried out Lili, "don't go! I'll tell everything!"

The mother came back to the bedside while Lili poured out her tale. "We were shooting with the bow, though we were told not to touch it. Then we hit something that cried out and then we got scared, and then we kept on being afraid and then we could not be happy any more."

"Of course you could not be happy, and cannot now either," the mother agreed. "Just think, Lili, because you did not obey, a poor child over in the cottage lies racked with pain. Perhaps she does not have a mother for she is a stranger. There she lies in a strange

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house, crying all through the long night."

"I'll go across and stay with her," said Lili dolefully, commencing to cry. "I too cannot sleep, mama, I am in such fear."

"You see, Lili, it is always this way when we have done wrong. I'll go to the poor child, and you must pray to God for an obedient heart and ask that your evil deed may not bring down great suffering on an innocent child."

Lili obeyed and was glad she could pray again, for after she had acknowledged her guilt she did not feel as though God was longer angry with her, and she now begged Him from the bottom of her heart to make her both good and obedient, and to speedily cure the wounded child.

Mrs. Birkenfeld sent Trine to Mrs. Kurd's house to find out whether a child there had really been shot and how it was getting along and whether the doctor had been summoned on this account.

Mrs. Kurd related in full to Trine all that

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had happened to Dora, and also what the doctor had said, and told of his promise to call again next morning.

Trine carefully reported back to Mrs. Birkenfeld, who rejoiced to know that the wound was not dangerous. She had been greatly worried over the possibility of an injured eye, this thought troubling her the most.

CHAPTER VII

DORA'S WISH IS FULFILLED

EARLY the following morning Mrs. Birkenfeld went over to the cottage and, as always, was received with real pleasure by Mrs. Kurd, for Mrs. Birkenfeld and her dear friend Lili had gone to school to Mr. Kurd and had been favorite pupils with him. The girls had been so studious that their progress gave their zealous teacher keen pleasure, and he had often talked about their extraordinary records to his wife. Mrs. Kurd led her caller into the house and urged her to take a chair, for there was so much to relate—they had not seen one another since the family of strangers had come to the cottage; and, besides, there was much of former days to recall, to say nothing of yesterday's accident.

When Mrs. Kurd had talked about some of these things a little while, Mrs. Birkenfeld asked for the pleasure of meeting the lodgers,

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and particularly the little daughter who had been injured by the arrow.

Mrs. Kurd went off to carry the message to Mrs. Ehrenreich, and the latter soon came down the stairs, Dora following, looking very pale and wan, her arm all bandaged.

After the first greeting Mrs. Birkenfeld went to the child, took her by the hand and inquired tenderly about the wound. Then, turning to Mrs. Ehrenreich, she expressed her deepest regret over the accident and inquired about her husband's health. Thereupon Aunt Ninette launched into an account of her husband's state of health; how he needed fresh air and how they had therefore sought with considerable trouble to find some quiet country place and had finally chosen this; how, in spite of their care, he had been forced to keep his window closed ever since their arrival as he could not stand any noise while he was working; how, for this reason, he was cut off from the fresh air; how she was experiencing great anxiety lest her husband, instead of recovering

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from his vertigo, might suffer a far worse attack.

Quickly sensing the situation, Mrs. Birkenfeld said, "I keenly regret if Mr. Ehrenreich is disturbed by the noise of the children. But if he does not go outdoors, he should have an especially airy place in which to carry on his work. This gives me an idea. Just behind our garden, far distant from the dwelling house and away from all the usually frequented spots, is a breezy little summer house. There are tables and chairs there and if Mr. Ehrenreich will make it his workroom, I will see that the children understand they must never go near."

The proposal pleased Aunt Ninette exceedingly, and she declared she would inform her husband of the offer, but wished to voice her own thanks then and there.

"And you, dear child," said Mrs. Birkenfeld, turning to Dora, "you must join us today, and every day after this, with your aunt's permission, and regain your strength and health

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over in our garden. My children have a great deal for which to make amends.”

“In the garden over there with the children?” asked Dora breathlessly, for she could scarcely believe her ears. And such joy lighted up her eyes that her aunt looked on in astonishment, she had never seen her so happy before. The child’s evident delight touched Mrs. Birkenfeld, and her motherly heart went out to the little girl in tenderest love. She did not know exactly why, but those joy-lit eyes recalled a world of memories. When it was agreed that immediately dinner was over Dora should go across to the garden and spend the rest of the day with the children, Mrs. Birkenfeld went home.

Aunt Ninette hurried to her husband’s room and informed him of the suggestion that he use the secluded summer house as his place of work. Uncle Titus favored it, for he really suffered from the lack of fresh air. Yet to go out walking and thereby take valuable time from his work was impossible—he had never

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done it. Therefore the present offer suited him capitally. He suggested that they take a look at the summer house at once. Aunt Ninette accompanied him. They walked around the edge of the garden in order to avoid the many lively children it held, and came at last to a small garden gate. They stepped through and came directly upon the quiet summer house which Mrs. Birkenfeld had described.

Two walnut trees stood guard beside the little house while the drooping branches of a wide-spreading weeping willow swept the roof, and green meadows stretched far on every side. Absolute silence pervaded the spot. Uncle Titus had brought out several great books under each arm, for he thought he would stay and begin his work if he liked the place. Aunt Ninette carried paper and ink-stand, while Dora trailed along behind with a wax taper and some cigars. As he was greatly pleased with the place, he arranged his materials, seated himself at the table, took deep breaths of the invigorating air that was

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wafted through the open windows and door, and rubbed his hands in keen enjoyment. Then he began to write, and Aunt Ninette and Dora returned to the cottage, well knowing that he wished to be alone now that he had every-

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thing arranged conveniently for his work.

The news of the twins' misdeed of yesterday quickly spread throughout the house. Rolf came home from his morning lessons and had gone to his bow immediately. One of the arrows was missing. In quick anger he rushed upstairs to discover who was guilty. He had little difficulty in solving the problem for the twins were so docile that they acknowledged repentantly they had done it. They even told Rolf how shocked they had been at the cry of pain they had heard after the shooting, and also how their mother was just then over at the cottage to learn whom they had hurt. They now accompanied Rolf across to Mrs. Kurd's little garden and showed him the place where the arrow might be. Sure enough, there it lay on the ground. In good humor again now that his arrow had been recovered, Rolf ran to Paula and Jul and cried out: "Do you know it? The twins have shot a child!" Thus it came about that all six children, Miss Hanenwinkel at the back, were standing on the

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stone steps outside the house awaiting their mother's return in the greatest suspense. Almost before she came in sight Hun called out: "Where did they shoot her?" and then, all in chorus: "Is it a child?"

"Is it a boy?"

"How big is it?"

"What is its name?"

"Is it in much pain?"

"Wait until we get into the house, at least," said the mother, warding them off.

Once in the living-room, they gathered around her while she told them of her visit to Mrs. Kurd's cottage, and that the twins had hurt a pale little girl. She had to wear a bandage bound so tightly around her arm that she could scarcely move it. She was about Paula's size, and might be about her age. She was evidently educated for she spoke well and appeared well brought up. Her name was Dora, and she was coming over into the garden that afternoon so they could all become acquainted.

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Now they were all in a state of tense expectation. How would Dora look? How would she talk? Would she be able to understand them? And each one wondered if she might not become his or her special friend.

Paula was so enchanted at the prospect she could only say, "Oh, mother, I am so happy she is just my age! And that she is so refined! Oh, how very happy I am!" And in secret, she hoped for a great engrossing friendship with the new neighbor, and could hardly wait until the afternoon arrived.

Rolf was of the opinion that Dora was just the right age to be able to solve his riddles; he would make friends with her at once. The twins had a feeling that Dora belonged entirely to them because they had shot her, and counted on her proving to be a capital play-mate, for in carrying out their plans they had need of a third person to put them into proper execution and their sister Paula was never in a mood for that. Little Hun was greatly pleased and said, "I am happy that Dora is

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coming for I can go to her when no one else has time for me and all our chairs are topsyturvy." For the uncomfortable Saturday mornings always stared him in the face when he never knew what to play or where to go. Jul in his turn said, "But, Hun, I want Dora for a friend too. What do you think we can do together?"

"You know, Jul," advised Hun after some reflection, "she can help pull off your riding boots. You remember there were not enough of us the last time."

"Correct!" admitted Jul in delight.

Meanwhile Dora lived through the morning in trembling expectation. At first it seemed her joy would overcome her. At last her wish was to come true. She was going to the garden with its glowing flowers, to visit the jolly children. Then suddenly a fear arose. Although she had learned to know them all by observing them through the hole in the hedge and each had awakened a special interest in her, yet she was entirely unknown to them—

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she was a total stranger. And Dora said to herself—the thought was very depressing—that she was so ignorant and so awkward, while the children over there were both accomplished and clever. Would she not be quite despised by them? Would they care to have anything to do with her? These questions troubled Dora so that she could scarcely eat her dinner, so excited was she. At last the longed-for time arrived when Aunt Ninette said, “You may go now, Dora.”

Dora put on her hat and started off at once. She entered the big house by the front door, and walked the length of the hall, stepping through the rear door into the garden. There all of a sudden she stood facing the entire family. Just in front of her sat Mr. Birkenfeld and his wife under the apple tree, all six children gathered around them. This was far from what Dora had been expecting, for she had thought she would meet only the children. She paused in perplexity and looked shyly on the company. But little Hun had already

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waited far too long for Dora to arrive, and immediately he saw her, he jumped down from his chair and ran to her. Holding out his hand he called, "Come right along, Dora! You'll find room on my chair with me. Come along!" Now he reached her, seized her firmly by the hand and drew her along. Then the other children advanced, and greeted her as though she were the oldest friend of the house. And thus, besieged by questions and welcomes, Dora reached the parents, who gave her such a



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heartly greeting that she lost all her diffidence. A few minutes later she was seated in the circle on a chair with the tiny Hun, and was talking as freely as though she belonged to the family. Father and mother had risen and paced back and forth in the garden for a while, while the children pressed close around Dora, each having something special to ask her. Paula said least; she was watching Dora and making her own estimate of the girl. Rolf and the twins stood as close as possible to Dora's chair, while Hun held her in a tight grasp so that she could not escape him.

"If you press around Dora too closely the first time she comes, she will not come again," remarked Jul who had stretched himself out full length on a garden chair. "Do give her room to breathe!"

"How old are you, Dora? Not much older than I am, are you?" asked Lili expectantly.

"I am just twelve years old," answered Dora.

"Oh, what a pity! Then you are as old as Paula," said Lili with a sigh, for she had

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hoped that, their age being the same, Dora would belong to her especially.

"No! no!" interrupted Rolf. "If she is twelve years old, she comes nearer to me than to Paula. She is practically the same age as I." Rolf saw in this circumstance a very good promise for his prospects. "Can you guess riddles easily, Dora, and do you like them?"

"I have made a riddle too," cried little Hun enthusiastically. "Just guess this one, Dora. No one can drink my first, but—"

Much offended at his little brother's interruption, Rolf cut Hun's riddle short. "Come, don't repeat your senseless riddle—it is really no riddle at all, Hun!" he said in rebuke. "Just listen to mine, Dora. My first tastes—"

But Rolf also failed to complete his riddle, for Lili had seized Dora's hand and, pulling her along, urged impetuously, "Come, Dora, come! I'll play all the tunes I know." For Dora had asked Lili if she played the piano and Lili took this particular moment as the most favorable opportunity to show the visitor

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her ability on the instrument. Lili was victorious, for Dora yielded to her suggestion and rose from her chair. She really desired to hear Lili play, but she did not wish to hurt Rolf's feelings, so, looking back, she said, "You need not feel sorry, Rolf. I certainly could not guess your riddle, so my answer would only bother you."

"Won't you try just once?" persisted Rolf, showing his disappointment.

"Surely, if you really wish it, I'll try a little later," Dora called back, for Lili had already pulled her along as far as the house. Hun had not let go, either, and hanging on to her hand had been dragged along. Now he cried, "And mine too, Dora! Mine too!" And looking down on the little fellow with a smile she promised to try to solve his riddle likewise.

The group arrived at the piano, and Willi quickly joined them, for he played well too. The twins had studied under Miss Hanenwinkel for a year now, having begun together. Their parents had a threefold purpose in mind.

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First of all they believed the children would find pleasure in playing. Then they hoped that music might have a softening effect on them,



and, besides, the time spent in practicing and at their lessons could not be given over to the invention of plans for mischief.

Lili had drawn Dora close up to the piano, but suddenly recalled the usual attitude in which she approached the instrument and said, "You know, Dora, playing the piano is fright-

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fully tiresome. Often I think I would sooner die than practice. Isn't that so, Willi?"

Willi agreed earnestly.

"Oh, Lili, how can you say such a thing?" asked Dora as she gave a longing look at the piano. "If I could only sit there and play a pretty song the way you do, it would be my greatest happiness!"

"You mean that?" asked Lili in surprise, looking thoughtfully at Dora.

The longing in Dora's eyes must have proved contagious, for Lili quickly opened the piano and began to play a little song. Dora sat down beside her, drinking in the melody thirstily and looking as though Lili were bestowing a great gift upon her.

Seeing Dora's delight, Lili herself became enthusiastic and was inspired to play her best. Her twin noticed Dora's rapt expression and pleaded, "Now let me play, Lili!" for he wanted to show off too. But Lili was far too enthused to relinquish her place. She did not stop a second, but with renewed zeal kept playing

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her song over and over from beginning to end.

"Don't you know another piece?" finally asked Dora.

"No, Miss Hanenwinkel will not give me another until I have learned to play my exercises properly," Lili explained. "But I know what I'll do now. Just wait until tomorrow, Dora! Yes, I do know something else," Lili continued, as she whirled around on her stool. "I know I will give you piano lessons, so you can play the song too. And then we will learn some other pieces together. How would you like that?"

"Oh, can you do that, Lili?" asked Dora, and she looked so intensely happy that Lili resolved to carry out the suggestion, and declared that the lessons were to commence the next morning.

"But my arm, Lili!" said Dora, suddenly discouraged. "I can't do it with my wounded arm."

But Lili would not allow her plans to be disturbed so easily as that.

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"Your arm will soon be better, and until it is I'll have to learn a lot so as to be able to teach you," she said to her prospective pupil.

And then the big bell rang, calling them to supper. Hun hurriedly seized Dora's hand with, "No time to be lost!" His father always appeared very punctually at the table, and Hun agreed with him that this was highly proper.

The table was spread under the apple tree, and loaded with many delicious dishes. Dora sat in the midst of the children and felt she must be dreaming as she looked around her at the flowers, the wide-spreading tree above and the happy faces, every one seeming like a dear old friend. It was all very wonderful and so much lovelier than anything she had ever imagined that she could scarcely grasp the fact that all this was true. A great fear welled up in her heart that she would soon wake up and find it all had been a dream. But Dora did not awake and while she had been lost in enchantment her plate had been heaped with such substantial food that there came a

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consciousness that she was experiencing a bit of real life.

"Eat your cake, Dora, or you will fall behind," warned Hun. "See, Jul and I have each had four already. But Jul and I always do everything right, except pulling off his riding boots. But you'll help us after this and then we'll get there, Dora, won't we?"

"Hun, stick to your cake," admonished Jul, and before Dora could give a reply, Mr. Birkenfeld joined in the conversation and asked about her father and her life in Hamburg and Karlsruhe.

So far Paula had made no effort to approach Dora. But now, when the meal was finished, she went up quietly to her chair and said, "Come with me for a little while, Dora."

Dora accepted the invitation gladly, for she had begun to fear that Paula did not like her and did not care to have anything to do with her and, regardless of the attraction she felt towards the quiet girl, they were not destined to be friends. But Paula had been slow in

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PAULA AND DORA WERE SO HAPPY THAT THEY WERE QUITE UNCON-
SCIOUS OF THE PASSING OF TIME AND NEVER
NOTICED THAT NIGHT HAD COME.

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making any advances as she desired first to learn what sort of a girl Dora was, and having decided that she liked her, she now took Dora by the arm and they disappeared toward the rear of the garden. And when the twins, Hun and then also Rolf tried to find her later and ran hither and thither calling for Dora, the guest had disappeared. For Paula had encircled the garden and had led her up to her own room. There the two sat down and soon lost all thought of time in talking together for they found they had much in common and each was experiencing the delight of finding one who cherished the same ideals. Paula and Dora were drawn into a close bond of friendship and were so happy that they were quite unconscious of the passage of time and never noticed that the stars were shining in the heavens and that night had come.

It had finally dawned on Mrs. Birkenfeld where the girls might be, and when she stepped into her daughter's room, Dora jumped up in amazement to find that it was night. Her aunt

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must have been expecting her quite a while!

The other children were downstairs and were somewhat disappointed that Dora should have disappeared as she did, for each had had some plan in which she was the principal figure. Rolf was especially angry. "You know, Dora," he complained, "you promised to guess my riddle."

But Dora was anxious to get back to the cottage, and Mrs. Birkenfeld declared they could continue their good times on the morrow when Dora must come again, as she could not sew. The children chimed in with exclamations of joy, and it was settled that Dora should return early the next morning and every day after that, so long as she stayed at the cottage, for they had so much to talk about and so many things to do that every moment of her holiday must be used. It seemed as though the leavetaking would never come to an end for each child had something special to say to Dora. At last Rolf made an end of the matter, for he had asked his parents

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if he might escort Dora home. As the two came to the space in front of the cottage, the stars shone so brightly above them that Dora paused. "Look, Rolf," she said, pointing to the sky, "do you see those five twinkling stars? I have known them so long. They always used to shine into my room in Karlsruhe and here they are together again."

"Oh, I know them well," Rolf declared at once. "They are on my chart. Do you know their names?"

"Do you really know the names of the stars?" asked Dora. "You know such a lot!" in wonder. "Those five belong together, do they not? And together they have a name? Of course, there are a lot of others that belong together; at least I've often thought so. Do you know them all? Oh, if only I could learn about them from you!"

Rolf was well pleased about this new branch of knowledge that he could take up to appease Dora's thirst for study.

"Come, listen, Dora," said he eagerly. "We

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will start in at once and I will show you them all, one after the other, even if it takes until midnight."

That statement, however, reminded Dora that it was already quite late and she said hastily, "No, no, Rolf. Not tonight, but thank you very much. But will you do it tomorrow?"

"Surely, Dora. Then, till tomorrow, remember! Good-night!"

"Good-night, Rolf," answered Dora and hurried into the house so overcome with her good fortune and the wealth of the day's events that she ran up the stairs to her waiting aunt, and poured out the story of it all with such surprising vivacity that her aunt warded her off. "Dora! Dora!" she exclaimed, quite shocked at the little girl's animation. "Have some thought! Such excitement is liable to affect your wounded arm. Go to bed—that will be best."

Dora went to her little room at once, but sleep was impossible just then. First she had to kneel down by her bed and thank

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the good Lord from the depths of her heart for letting her experience such joy as had come that day, and ask Him to grant her still more. After such joy she would gladly go back to her work and the slow, dreary days without complaint. She would never forget these holidays and the happiness that had come with them. For a long, long time Dora could not close her eyes in sleep for gratitude and joy.

CHAPTER VIII

MORE RIDDLES AND MORE SOLUTIONS

EARLY the next morning when Jul clattered through the hall with his big boots and spurs he opened the door of the schoolroom. Miss Hanenwinkel never gave lessons this early and yet the sounds of loud practicing on the piano had been heard for quite a long while. There sat Lili at the piano and Willi stood alongside, deeply interested, and evidently waiting for his turn to practice to arrive.

"What ever has come over you?" called out Jul to the twins. "Is this to be the start of another prank?" Then bursting out laughing at them, he went his way.

Downstairs he met Miss Hanenwinkel, and asked, "What has happened to the twins? Are they at last going to make an attempt to become virtuous?"

"Seven-year-olds are often more successful than seventeen-year-olds, Master Jul," was the curt reply.

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Jul went along chuckling and at the front door he met his mother, who planned to make use of the early morning hour for a hurried trip to the doctor, for she wished to learn how serious the injury was to Dora's arm and what might be the danger. Mrs. Ehrenreich's words of anguish had caused her great anxiety and she wished to find out if the wound might prove to be serious.

"Don't I hear someone at the piano, Jul?" inquired his mother, "though that is something quite unusual at this time of day."

"My dear mother, I believe the world is coming to an end," answered Jul. "Lili is up there, rushing from one exercise to another as though she could not find any occupation more delightful. And Willi stands by with a similar thirst for action and is burning up with a desire to quench it."

"That is curious," remarked the mother, "for only yesterday Miss Hanenwinkel was complaining to me that Lili had no liking for the piano, and she really could not persuade

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her to practice at all, not even her little song, to say nothing of her exercises."

"As I said, mother," repeated Jul, as he bade her good-bye, "I fear the end of the world is coming."

"Perhaps it is only beginning," remarked the mother as she walked down the hill.

Mrs. Birkenfeld was able to see the doctor immediately on her arrival and put her many anxious questions to him. He assured her Dora's wound was well on the way to healing, and in reply to her inquiry if there was anything to be feared in the way of permanent stiffness, the doctor assured her with a laugh that that was out of the question, but with the young folk, one needed to take care or else a second catastrophe might follow the first, and such a mishap to Dora would be most unfortunate. So far, all was going well with her and she would make a complete recovery in a few days.

This information lightened the heart of Mrs. Birkenfeld, for the possibility that Dora might

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have sustained permanent injury at the hands of her children in a thoughtless action had worried her.

Before returning home, Mrs. Birkenfeld paid a visit to Aunt Ninette at the cottage to reassure her about Dora's condition. Then too she wished to speak to the aunt concerning the little girl for she had heard that Dora had to sew on the shirts, and that it was for financial reasons the aunt wished to keep her at the work.

Mrs. Birkenfeld had a lively sympathy for Dora, and felt she was both too young and too frail to carry on such heavy work day after day. She was glad that some time remained before she would have to return to Karlsruhe and the regular work, and Mrs. Birkenfeld urged Aunt Ninette to allow the child to be free from the work of sewing as long as she was here. The work would be done by her own seamstress, she declared, and Dora should enjoy the fresh air with her children and thus gain full strength.

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The thoughtful, quiet manner of Mrs. Birkenfeld had a beneficent effect on Aunt Ninette, who agreed to all that Mrs. Birkenfeld proposed and this without a single complaint. Everything at last appeared to her to have changed, and what had before seemed to promise so ill now suddenly assumed the most favorable aspect. Aunt Ninette was so bright and cheerful in mind that she was surprised at herself about it. She had to relate, with many thanks, how well and comfortable her husband felt since he was occupying his quiet, airy summer house. He liked the spot so well that he remained there well into the night, and could hardly tear himself away.

On departing Mrs. Birkenfeld invited Aunt Ninette to visit them often in their garden, so as not to be so lonely. And Aunt Ninette was pleased to accept, for she had quite forgotten the noise over there that had been so disturbing.

Dora had scarcely opened her eyes that morning when she leaped out of bed, for the

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joy of going over to her friends again today made her wide awake. To be sure, she had to wait a while before her aunt permitted her to go, for breaking in on people was not this lady's habit. Only after Mrs. Birkenfeld had tarried quite a while and finally asked for Dora was she summoned, and at the proposal of the caller, Dora was finally permitted to go. This time she did not pause, nor did she look shyly around; with a few springs she was in the entry of the big house and at once there rang out through the open door of the living-room the welcome of many voices. Willi and Lili, tiny Hun and Paula, all came running to meet her and she was led into the room amid shouts of joy. Jul had just returned from his morning ride and had thrown himself into his arm-chair, sticking out his legs as though inviting someone to undertake the work of pulling off his boots. Instantly Dora ran up to him and asked obligingly if she might take them off and would have begun at once. But Jul pulled back his legs hastily with the exclamation, "No,

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no, Dora! That won't do! What are you thinking of?" Then rising from his chair, he offered it to her. But the twins tugged at her from either side and kept crying, "Come along with us, Dora! Come along with us!" while from behind Hun clung fast to her, insisting, "Come with me! Come with me!" And Paula whispered into Dora's ear, "Go along with the twins first. Otherwise they will never cease their noise. I will come for you later on and

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then we will have our time together."

"Dora," now said Jul, warding off the three besiegers a little, "you better stick to me if you want to have a peaceful existence in this house. You see if you spend your time with Paula you will become romantic and surely lose your appetite; if you choose Rolf as your companion your entire life will be one great endless riddle."

"It will be that anyhow," remarked Miss Hanenwinkel who was passing through the room.

"If you spend your time with Miss Hanenwinkel," continued Jul quickly so that the governess should hear his words, "you will get into the pickle instead of the sugar like the prunes do. But if you hold on to the twins, they will tear you to pieces, while Hun will make you deaf."

In spite of the threatened dangers, Dora allowed herself to be dragged away by the importunate twins, and Hun ran along behind.

Once arrived at the piano, Lili plunged into

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her tune, and played and played. When she had finished, she gave a quick glance at Dora and the latter, always delighted, nodded her head, at which Lili started again from the beginning. And then Dora began to sing, and Willi, who was waiting in vain for his turn at the piano to come, joined in. Whereupon little Hun also raised his voice and a far resounding chorus went up:

“Rejoice ye in living,
While yet ye may:
Pluck ye the roses,
Ere they droop and decay.”

The musicians were so inspired with the beautiful song that they raised their voices until, aided by Hun, it became a deafening performance. Suddenly Lili whirled around on her stool.

“But tomorrow! Wait until tomorrow! Then you will learn something!” she declared, her face glowing with anticipation. Lili had practiced so faithfully, she felt she had a right to demand half a dozen new songs from Miss Hanenwinkel.

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THE MUSICIANS WERE SO INSPIRED THAT THEY RAISED THEIR
VOICES UNTIL, AIDED BY HUN, IT BECAME A
DEAFENING PERFORMANCE.

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Now the bell tinkled calling the twins to their studies. This gave the tiny Hun cause for rejoicing for now he would have Dora all to himself until dinner. She devoted the time to him so pleasantly and took such an interest in the ingenious things his nutcracker could do that Hun made the firm resolve that he would never let Dora get away from him again. But this plan was frustrated soon after the noon meal. Paula had finished her French lessons and with her mother's consent went off with Dora. The latter could not wish for anything better, for they had formed a companionship so close and so loving that she would have preferred spending the whole day with Paula, and the night too. Then they could share all their thoughts, their hopes, their fears, the experiences the past had brought to each and their longings for the future. Both had the feeling that never, never could they be too much together even though they were never separated for the rest of their lives.

Again they forgot the passing of the hours,

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and it was not until seven o'clock, when the whole family had gathered under the apple tree for supper, that the pair appeared and hurriedly took their places at the table. They seated themselves as quickly as they could for Mr. Birkenfeld cleared his throat in a manner that Paula knew was a sign that matters were out of order. From time to time during the meal Rolf cast knowing glances at Dora as though to say, "We two will soon start our study of the stars together, just remember that!"

When all tarried in pleasant conversation after the meal, Rolf directed a careful eye on the firmament, and as soon as the stars began to twinkle through the branches of the apple tree, he jumped up and ran over to Dora.

"Now, Dora, just look; see above there!" and with this he drew her along until they reached the far corner of the garden, for he wished to make sure that none of the others would break in suddenly to claim Dora. Here under the walnut trees Rolf felt secure, and

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AS SOON AS THE STARS BEGAN TO TWINKLE THROUGH THE
BRANCHES OF THE APPLE TREE, HE JUMPED UP AND RAN
OVER TO DORA. "NOW, DORA, JUST LOOK;
SEE ABOVE THERE!"

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selecting a suitable spot for observation of the sky, he began the lesson.

"Do you see, Dora, there are your five stars? One alone, then two together, and two again. Do you see them?"

"Oh, I know them; I know them so well!" Dora assured him.

"Good! This constellation is called Cassiopeia. Now I'll show you another. But no; wait a minute, Dora! A riddle has just come into my mind. You can easily guess it. Will you?"

"I will if I can; but I fear your riddles are too difficult for me."

"No, no; just listen. I'll state it slowly:

'My first tastes good at table,
Better still in stable.
People pass my second to and fro,
Sometimes fast and sometimes slow.
Look into the Heavens any clear night,
Then my whole will greet you with delight.'

"Now have you guessed it?"

"Oh, no, Rolf! I never can guess that! Don't you see I am quite stupid? I am sorry too,

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for it must be dull wasting your time on me," said Dora, full of regret.

"No, no; that's not so! It is just because you are not used to it," consoled Rolf. "Just try a few times and then it will come quite easily. Here, I'll ask another one, an easy one:

'My first means to make replete,
As heartily you eat.
With my second people kiss,
Evil words pass through amiss.
My whole's a given name
Of many, some of fame.'"

"Oh, I can't guess that one either! Don't waste your time on me, Rolf; I know so little," Dora pleaded.

"Wait! Perhaps you know about foreign countries," Rolf said and before she could protest again he had begun to recite in a loud voice:

'Hades my first, in other name
My second is an equine;—
None other is quite so tame.
My whole the Arts did all refine
In ancient days of greatest fame,
Now all too sadly in decline.'"

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"*Hellas!*" sounded a deep bass voice from behind the children suddenly. They drew back in fear and then Dora burst out into a quick laugh.

"It is Uncle Titus, who is working in the summer house. Come, Rolf! Let's go in and see him."

Rolf was quite willing, and they found Uncle Titus leaning against the wall for greater ease, looking very much amused.

Rolf returned the friendly greeting of Mr. Ehrenreich, and inquired if it were he who had answered his riddle just now.

"Yes, yes, my son," answered Uncle Titus, patting him on the shoulder. "And was my answer correct?"

"Yes, it was," replied Rolf, highly pleased. "And did you guess the other two riddles also, Mr. Ehrenreich?" he inquired.

"Perhaps so, my lad," responded Uncle Titus. "Would I be wrong if I suggested that the first was *Milky Way* and the second *Philip*?"

"Oh, oh, they are all solved!" exclaimed Rolf,

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THEY DREW BACK IN FEAR AND THEN DORA BURST OUT IN A QUICK LAUGH. "IT IS UNCLE TITUS, WHO IS WORKING IN THE SUMMER HOUSE. COME, ROLF! LET'S GO IN AND SEE HIM."

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overjoyed. "It's great making riddles if someone guesses them. I had another one, a second and then still another. May I tell you one of them right away, Mr. Ehrenreich?"

"Certainly, my dear son! Why not?" answered Mr. Titus in the friendliest manner. "I will try to solve all three. Let's have them."

Rolf thought a moment to refresh his memory, then he began in ecstasy:

"My first the fleets do form,
To fight the battles and the storm.
Among crocodiles my second
Is generally reckoned.
My whole, he sails the seas,
Columbus one of these."

"Have you guessed it?"

"Perhaps, my son, perhaps. Go on with the next."

Rolf started off again with:

"My first's a useful curve,
In building strength to serve.
Self means my second word.
An Aryan race, my third.
My whole an ancient Greek,
A scientist you'll seek."

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"Do you know that too?"

"Possibly. Keep right on."

"Now for a tough one," said Rolf.

'Of noble titles not the least
My first. My second is a vocal.
My third is a great kingly beast;
In jungles he is local.
My whole was a Thessalian king,
At whom your guesses you may fling.'

"Now, my son, let's guess a while," suggested Uncle Titus with an amused smile. "Number one, *navigator*. Number two, *Archimedes*. Number three, *Deucalion*."

"Every one correct! That's great! That's what I've always longed for—that my riddles should go that well," said Rolf with huge satisfaction. "Up until this moment I have always had to pile one riddle on top of the other unsolved. Now they have all been guessed and I can start afresh."

"I'll make you a proposition, my son," said Mr. Titus, rising from the table and preparing to return to the cottage. "Come to me here every evening and bring me the fruits of your

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meditations. Who knows, perhaps I can also give you something to solve."

It was too late to resume the study of the



stars, and that had to be postponed for another time.

Exceedingly happy over the highly successful meeting, Rolf and Dora ran back to the house, where the family had long since been expecting them, while Uncle Titus walked home in quiet elation over his new found friend.

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Mr. Ehrenreich had always wished for a son, but would have preferred one who would enter the world as a twelve-year-old, leaving all its babyhood crying behind it and with whom he could immediately, on its arrival, hold rational conversations. Rolf answered this longing in every way, and more than this had shown unconcealed happiness in the companionship of Uncle Titus. The scholar had conceived a true fatherly affection for the youngster which bared anew his enshrouded heart and afforded him an unwonted feeling of pleasant well-being.

As he strode back toward Mrs. Kurd's cottage under the starlit heavens, Uncle Titus began to sing:

"Rejoice ye in living,
While yet ye may,"

for the melody that had rung out so loudly on the morning air had penetrated the silences of his retreat and had lodged in his heart and mind.

Aunt Ninette stood gazing out of the second

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story open window of the cottage and as he came she exclaimed to herself in astonishment,
“Can *that* be my husband? Can Titus Ehrenreich be *singing?*”

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH THE RIGHT THING HAPPENS

THE days now began to pass on winged feet and in both the Birkenfeld house and the neighboring cottage the remark was often made, "Already the end of another week!" or "Another Sunday morning here so soon!" The days sped by in a manner these folk had never experienced before.

For Dora more than for all the others, these days were far too short. It was as though they had held but half as many hours as they had back in Karlsruhe. Each evening when she went to bed she regretted anew that such a large portion of the precious time had to be spent in sleep. She would have much preferred sitting at the piano all night practicing her exercises and melodies while the others slumbered.

The wounded arm had healed long ago and piano lessons had begun, and were carried on

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daily with great eagerness. Lili was all afire with her work as teacher. She demanded no finger exercises and scales, but plunged her pupil directly into playing pieces and Dora could actually play with her right hand the favorite song, "Rejoice Ye in Living." Lili waited a little while before she asked for the left hand accompaniment for that was too difficult a thing to attempt all at once.

Through the giving of the lessons, the young teacher became so zealous in her own study that she made startling progress. So much so that Miss Hanenwinkel, who had heretofore had only complaint and condemnation of Lili's musical ability, now showed the greatest wonder over the sudden fruits of her labor. Mrs. Birkenfeld also noticed the change with keen pleasure, and often paused at the door to listen to her daughter's playing, her face showing her quiet enjoyment. The child really possessed much musical talent and now the right impulse having been given, her progress was to be commended.

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Paula lived in uninterrupted bliss for now she possessed her long desired companion. And such a companion! Dora understood her innermost thoughts and indeed shared them. And if Paula had longed for years for a friend, so also had Dora. Now that they had both attained the fulfillment of their highest desires, Paula found the reality of the friendship much, much more beautiful than all the imagination she had bestowed on it had ever pictured it could be. For she had never conceived a being so adorable as Dora, and she, like her new-found friend, lay down in deepest melancholy each night at the thought that they had to sleep away so much of the time of Dora's holiday.

Rolf had become so serious over the matter of riddles that one could often see him striding back and forth in the garden, hands clasped behind his back. At these times he was so lost in thought that his little brother Hun had to be warned not to get in his way, for several times of late Rolf had actually run into him and knocked him down. Rolf had to compose

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several riddles a day now, for every evening Uncle Titus expected him at the summer house, and showed intense interest and keen pleasure in them. His remarkable ability to solve them urged Rolf to ever new performances and spurred the boy on to fresh mental activity. Besides, Mr. Titus began to hand Rolf his own riddles from time to time, always in writing, for they demanded study as they were always in the Latin language. Each time the riddle would be read aloud by Rolf to his father and to Jul, but they never solved them. The father declared he had forgotten his Latin altogether too much, while Jul said it was unreasonable to expect him to put himself to such mental strain during his holidays. He would soon have to take all his brain power back to school with him; this was his holiday time. But Rolf pondered and searched his mind and pored over his Latin dictionary. He meditated and speculated, never giving up until he had the luck to dig out the meaning of the riddle. This he would take triumphantly to his father

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and to Jul, and then in the evening would pass it over to Mr. Titus. That amiable gentleman showed a pleasure as keen as Rolf's own every time the lad brought in a solution, which fact again spurred the boy on so powerfully in his Latin that he made rapid strides in the study. In fact, he took his books out into the garden in the early morning hours. It was as though he could not study Latin long enough.

The tiny Hun experienced the happiest of days for however often or for whatever length of time he hung on Dora and claimed her attention, she never pushed him aside, never ran away from him. She was always his friend, and always ready to entertain him as if she herself found the greatest happiness in doing so. Mrs. Birkenfeld had somehow managed to secure Aunt Ninette's consent to Dora having every morning and every evening free. She was to work at her shirt sewing only in the afternoons, and then it was to be out under the apple tree in company with the whole

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family. It was in this way that Dora came to realize after a while that what once had been the tedious task of sewing shirts was now one of the most pleasant occupations imaginable—that it was only the surrounding conditions that counted.

During the many hours of each day when Hun had Dora all to himself she had found a new riddle for her little friend, so that now he did not need to repeat the old one about the nutcracker, for he had a fixed idea that he must always be giving out riddles to everybody. He experienced excessive pleasure with his new riddle. It was an unequalled triumph. No soul in the whole house could work out the solution. Thus he was enabled to go constantly from one to the other and repeat his verse, for now no one dared repel him with, "Run away, Hun! You are always repeating the same old riddle!" Every time anyone made a wrong guess, Hun danced with joy, and he and Dora conspired with one another never on any account to give any hint of the correct

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answer. The riddle he proposed ran thus:

"Near my first all must cry.
For my second many sigh.
My whole most will deny."

All had tried to guess the answer, but everyone had failed.

Jul said, "*Reckless* is the answer. All cry when near a wreck. When it comes to trouble many sigh for less. When accused of being reckless, most people deny it, though of course our twins could never give such a denial as that."

Hun leaped for joy and exclaimed, "Wrong, wrong!"

Miss Hanenwinkel said, "It is *troublesome*. All cry when they are near trouble. Many sigh for a goodly sum. Most will deny they are troublesome. But we know some young persons who are."

"Wrong again! Wrong again!" exulted Hun.

"*Schoolroom* is the word," asserted Rolf.

"Oh, ho, Rolf, you've guessed wrong! You've

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guessed wrong!" shouted Hun with joy.

"Should not the answer be *children's bed*?" asked Mrs. Birkenfeld. "Children are always crying when it's time to go to bed. The



children's bed is always denied because they do not want to go to it."

"Mama's wrong too! Mama also!" rejoiced Hun, hopping around.

"It is *farewell-day*," declared the father. "A farewell makes us all cry; every day many

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cry; for the farewell-day for Dora we all say no."

"Not right! Not right, papa," again shouted Hun in high glee and he skipped all about the room, for that his father should have missed was his chief joy. The lucky young possessor of the secret kept running from one to the other with the plea, "Guess! Guess!"

Rolf was really angry that such a simple riddle offered by Hun should require so much effort, and then that no one should offer the solution.

Meanwhile the progress of time was not to be checked; the days passed one by one.

"My dear Ninette," said Mr. Titus at breakfast one morning, "we are facing the last week of our stay here. But how would it be if we prolonged it two weeks? I feel uncommonly well. The dizziness is all gone, and there is a new vitality in my body."

"Anyone can see that, my dear Titus," responded his wife. "You look ten years younger than when we came."

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"To my mind, the new manner of life suits you equally well. It seems I never hear you lamenting any more, dear Ninette."

"Yes, that is true," said Aunt Ninette. "Everything is so entirely changed, and even the noise the children make is different when we are acquainted with each of them. Yes, I must say I am very happy to think we did not move. Now something seems lacking when I do not hear the children's voices, and I grow quite anxious lest something has gone wrong if there is not a little noise and their voices do not reach me from the garden."

"That is exactly the way it is with me," assented Uncle Titus, "and each evening it is an actual joy to me when that lively youngster storms my summer house. He cannot wait until he tells me all that he has done and reads every one of my words aloud when I give him a problem. It is indeed a true pleasure to have such a boy-around."

"My dear Titus, what enthusiasm! You seem younger than I have ever known you.

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"We'll stay right here," determined Aunt Ninette, "as long as circumstances permit, for even our doctor himself could not have foreseen such an outcome of our country sojourn. It is remarkable."

Immediately after this conversation, Dora rushed over to Paula in the greatest ecstasy to repeat the news, for the thought of the approaching departure had been like a nightmare to Dora. How could she live separated from all these new friends she loved so dearly and with whom she lived now as though she were one of them? It seemed to Dora her heart must really break when the day of separation arrived. As the news of Dora's longer stay spread through the great house, jubilation broke loose and Dora was nearly crushed to death for every child wanted to express its own happiness.

That evening Mrs. Birkenfeld sat beside her husband on the sofa, for it was the custom of the father and mother to talk over their own and their children's problems after the children

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had all gone to rest and the governess had withdrawn. They spoke about their neighbors prolonging their stay and Mrs. Birkenfeld concluded her expressions of pleasure with the words, "However, the day will soon come when we will lose the child and so much do I dread it that it is a painful thought to me. I cannot put into words the blessing Dora has brought to our house, but we all feel it at every turn. Every day I discover some new proof of her good influence. Besides, the child attracts me more than I can understand, and when I look into her eyes it is as though I have known her ever so long, and memories of long gone days well up in me."

"Ah, dear wife, you always feel that way when you take to loving anybody," rejoined Mr. Birkenfeld. "Well do I remember after you had known me a short time you had the impression that we had, in former times, had some unexplainable relationship."

"However that may be, you mocker," returned his wife, "there are sufficient reasons

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this time. I know how everybody in this house has changed since she came. Paula goes around like the bright sunshine; no trace any more of her being out of temper. Jul takes off his riding boots himself, without upsetting the whole household as formerly. Rolf is in such a fever of study that he does not waste a minute of the day. Lili has suddenly developed a diligence and skill at her piano of which none thought her capable, and little Hun is so busy and so utterly contented that it makes one happy just to look at him."

"Is there any connection between Dora and the absence of the pranks of the twins that used to upset the house?" asked Mr. Birkenfeld.

"Undoubtedly," his wife assured him. "Somehow Dora has known how to arouse in Lili an enthusiasm for the piano, and all the energies of that lively child are in that direction. Willi shares her eagerness, so that these two have no more time to plan and carry out ridiculous adventures."

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"A peculiar being, this Dora," mused Mr. Birkenfeld. "It is a pity she is going away," he said regretfully.

"That is my chief trouble," continued his wife, "and I have been thinking up all sorts of schemes to prolong her stay a little."

"No, no," interrupted the husband, "that won't do. We have too slight an acquaintance with these people for that. We must let them leave now, but perhaps we can arrange things so that they will return next year."

Mrs. Birkenfeld sighed; she thought of the long winter and how little certainty there was of their return.

The days passed away, and the last week of the Ehrenreichs' stay had come. The approaching Monday was set as the day of their departure, and the Sunday before a great leave-taking supper was to be held, although no one was in the humor for festivities. Rolf alone was active in the preparations, and planned that on Sunday evening the summer house was to be gay with colored lights and several choice

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riddles were to be suspended inside as transparencies, in honor of his patron.

On Saturday Dora sat as usual with the children at lunch. In view of the approaching event their appetites seemed to have dwindled, for as the mother served the soup, voices from all sides arose in protest.

"Only a little!" pleaded one and from another, "Please, please, very little."

A third requested, "Kindly give me hardly any."

"I would prefer none today, thanks!" declared someone else, and a last insisted "Still less for me, please!"

"I would like to know," interjected the father, "if you are all denying yourself food on account of the pain of the coming farewell or because of the fact that we have onion soup today."

"*Onion soup! Onion soup!* That's the solution!" cried Rolf, and it was like a veritable cry of victory. "That's the answer to Hun's riddle," for he had found the shame of the

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little boy's unsolved riddle almost unbearable.

The answer was correct.

Little Hun was quite downcast that the solution had been offered and said rather dolefully, "Oh, papa, if you had not mentioned the word *deny* in connection with the onion soup, no one would ever have guessed my riddle. Now it's all over."

But Dora, who had sat next to him ever since he had first shared his chair with her, had consolation ready for him and she whispered, "No, no, Hun; it is not all over. You see this afternoon I'll guide your hand while you write your riddle in my album. Then I will tell it to a lot of people in Karlsruhe who do not know anything about it."

Hun was so comforted that he was able to finish his lunch. But outside under the apple tree where they all gathered after the meal, it was apparent everyone was under a strain. It was the last time, at least for a long, long period and perhaps forever, that Dora would be with them, for tomorrow she would have to

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spend with her aunt to help with the packing for the journey. It would not be until evening that she would come over with her aunt and uncle just long enough for the leavetaking supper.

Paula sat there with tears in her eyes and never uttered a word. Lili had given evidence of her grief by her restless movements, and at last she declared suddenly, "Mama, I shall not want to play the piano any more for I will find it frightfully tiresome when Dora isn't here. And then Miss Hanenwinkel will say again that I am lazy. I won't care for music any more; practicing won't be fun then."

"Oh my, oh my!" sighed Jul. "We are going to enter hard, life-risking times if the twins find matters tedious. But so far as I can see, there is no good reason for Dora's departure," he continued in actual anger. "It would do her worlds of good to stay here until winter. Her aunt and uncle could go back to their peaceful abode in Karlsruhe alone."

The mother at once replied that she would

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beg the aunt and uncle to promise to return next year but just now they must be reconciled to the parting, though she herself would not find it easy.

Hun alone busied himself with thoughts of the present more than with dread of the future, and was thereby content. Pulling at Dora's apron, he urged, "Now fetch out your book! Do bring out your book, Dora!"

Dora had brought over her album, for in accordance with the good old-fashioned custom she wished each of her friends to inscribe a verse in it. It was no new elegant album that she possessed, but an old book with yellowed leaves, most of which had been written on in fast fading ink. Here and there were posies pasted. They had all lost their color and were half fallen to pieces. The book had belonged to Dora's mother and evidently she had owned it from childhood, for the mottoes and verses were all written in children's hands. There were a few drawings, one of a cottage with a little man at a spring. This attracted little

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Hun's attention and he took the book in his hands to examine it closely. Then turning the pages he exclaimed knowingly, "Ah! Ah!" and took out a little piece of paper that lay between the pages. "Mama has that too. It is from Lili, whom I must fetch back from America."

Jul burst out laughing. "What foolish talk are you giving Dora, Hun?" he asked.

The mother glanced quickly at the youngster, then took the piece of paper from his hand and read, while great tears rolled down her cheeks.



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The memories of long-past years of that happy beloved child-face rose before her and overwhelmed her. What visions! The loving image of her own mother, long since in the grave, and all the happy days of childhood; all that old, vanished time.

This was the half of their little page that had been held by her beloved companion Lili. It was the verse they had composed together. The mother laid the piece of paper in her husband's hand for she was unable to read it aloud. The other half she drew forth from her notebook, where she had carried it ever since it had made its reappearance. The children eagerly put their heads together and gazed with the most intense interest at their father as he matched the two narrow strips. They had both turned yellow with age, and now together formed a sheet of notepaper of the ordinary size. They were written in the same childish hand and now being placed together the sense was clear. After the father had looked over the words, he read them aloud:

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"Thy hand	in mine
Firm	they combine.
It is	a token.
But, alas!	none knows;
One stays,	the other goes!
Each one	heart-broken.
And now	we divide
This page,	half each side.
Comes the day	of our hope.
Then the strips,	like our lips,
Fit	each in each,
Till we die	joy in heart,
You and I	never to part,
Never	a breach!"

The mother had taken Dora by the hand. "How did you get this little piece of paper, dear child?" she asked in deep emotion.

"It is my mother's album and the piece of paper has always rested there," answered the wondering Dora.

"You are my Lili's child!" exclaimed Mrs. Birkenfeld. "It was not without a reason that your look always recalled to me the beloved memories of former days!" And in the greatest agitation she folded Dora in her arms.

The children were thrown into unusual ex-

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citement, but seeing their mother so agitated, they restrained themselves and sat in absolute silence, their gaze focused on Dora and their mother.

At last little Hun broke the silence: "Do I not need to go to America now, mama?" he asked, evidently greatly pleased at the prospect of being able to stay at home, for immediately he had given his bold promise he had become a little uncomfortable at the thought of going to America all alone.

"No, no, we will all stay right here," his mother declared to ease his mind while she led Dora to the children, holding her by the hand. "Dora is now the Lili you wanted to bring back."

"Oh, mama," Paula cried with unusual vivacity, "let us two, Dora and I, be the ones to carry on all that you and Lili began. Then we can both say:

'Comes the day of our hope.

Then the strips, like our lips,
Fit each in each.

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Till we die joy in heart
You and I never to part.
Never a breach!"

"Oh yes! and we too,"—"And I"—"We want to, too,"—"And so do I,"—thus resounded the

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cries from the twins, from Rolf, from little Hun and last the bass voice of the big Jul. But the mother had seized her husband's arm and she had disappeared with him under the trees.

"I am willing, quite willing—quite willing," the father kept repeating while his wife was talking to him with great fervor. Then they separated and Mrs. Birkenfeld went over to the cottage.

Here she had herself announced immediately to Aunt Ninette, and as they sat side by side at the window, she related to Mrs. Ehrenreich with warmth what a wonderful discovery she had made just now. How intense was her joy; how Dora was the child of the first and dearest friend of her youthful days; how she had mourned for her for many years, and had never forgotten her. Now she knew that this dear friend was long since dead but she would like so much to hear further about her life and also to have details about Dora, concerning whom she had not thus far asked many ques-

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tions, for Mrs. Ehrenreich had seemed unwilling to discuss the matter.

Mrs. Birkenfeld was unable to learn as much as she wished about her friend Lili for Aunt Ninette had never known her. Her brother who had spent several years in America had become acquainted with her there. He had married her and brought her to Hamburg but had lost her through death soon after Dora's birth.

Then Mrs. Birkenfeld went directly to her point, informing Aunt Ninette how many munificent blessings she had enjoyed in the house of Lili's father and what gratitude was due from her to this family whose kindness had affected her entire life. She would like to pay off some of this debt through Dora. What she would like best would be for the aunt and uncle to permit her to keep Dora and rear her as though she were her own child.

Mrs. Birkenfeld did not meet with the opposition she feared. Aunt Ninette informed her quite frankly that Dora possessed no inheri-

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tance; that she would soon have to begin to earn her living as a seamstress as they themselves, uncle and aunt, were in no position financially to give her any further education. So she looked upon it as a great good fortune for the child to have found such friends, and she was sure her husband would rejoice as much as she.

Mrs. Birkenfeld grasped Aunt Ninette's hand heartily and then hurried away, for she was eager to tell the good news to the children. She well knew what jubilation it would arouse. She found her children still gathered under the apple tree, every eye watching eagerly for her return, for they were sure she was planning some happy surprise, and they believed that it concerned the prolongation of Dora's stay. So they awaited in extreme impatience the outcome. Now when their mother announced that thenceforward Dora belonged to them, that she was to be their sister always, an absolute child of their family, they let out such cries of joy that they resounded throughout the entire

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garden, even to the farthest corner. Uncle Titus stepped out of the summer-house and listened with a smile of pleasure, murmuring half aloud, "Such a pity it is nearing its end!"

At the same moment Aunt Ninette stood at her own window, gazed down into the garden and heard the exclamations of the elated children. Her face lighted up, and she said to herself, "We shall miss it when we hear them no more."

Now the children were in the mood for a festival, and one outbid the other with plans for a grand celebration—it was to be an affair in honor of Uncle Titus and Aunt Ninette, and must be a feast such as the garden had never known from the beginning of its existence.

That night Dora entered her little room in the cottage for the last time. On the morrow she would move over the way to become a member of the Birkenfeld household and the happy children there, on whom she had at first looked with such shy longing, were to be her brothers and sisters. The lovely garden for

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which she had longed so intensely was to be her place for play, and once more she was to have a father and mother who would surround her with loving care. She would share the hours of study, and now the music lessons would be undertaken seriously.

All these thoughts welled up in Dora's heart and filled her with such happiness that she could scarcely bear the burden of joy. Certainly her father must be looking down and rejoicing with her! She stood by her window and gazed up at the starlit heavens, and there were her five dear stars gleaming down on her. Then Dora recalled how she had looked on those stars in sadness and despair, as though she did not know of a dear Father in Heaven who always led to the best. Dora dropped to her knees to thank Him with all her heart for His guidance, and determined firmly and ardently that whatever fell to her lot, henceforth she would not forget the little verse her father so often used, but in all her fears and cares she would say:

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"Yet God in loving wisdom
Keeps guard o'er us below."

Uncle Titus and Aunt Ninette bespoke their lodging with Mrs. Kurd for the next summer, for they were already happy in the thought of



coming back the next year. Yes, Uncle Titus went a step further: he asked Mrs. Kurd to promise never to let her rooms to anyone else, for he had been so content and happy there, and was so sorry to leave, that he would like to assure himself of being able to occupy the

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cottage whenever he could find it convenient to come back.

On Monday morning the entire Birkenfeld family gathered around the traveling coach and there followed a hearty farewell from all sides. At the last moment Rolf called Uncle Titus to one side and asked eagerly whether or not he might send a riddle to him in Karlsruhe now and then. Uncle Titus assured him it would please him immensely to receive them just as often as he cared to send them, and promised to send back the solutions promptly. It would establish a bond between the two which Uncle Titus longed to have grow stronger with the passing years.

The artful Hun, who had not allowed this conversation to escape his ears, instantly declared, "Then I am going to send mine as well," for he had no shadow of doubt that the happiness of Uncle Titus would be that much greater, though in his heart he felt the Karlsruhe people would never guess his riddle in a lifetime, and that thought afforded the little fellow

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a sense of uncommon satisfaction and contentment.

As the carriage rumbled away, Dora and Paula turned, arm in arm, to the garden, singing happily:

“Till we die, joy in heart,
You and I never to part.”

THE END

